A window open on the world

The UNESCO Courier

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# LATIN AMERICA

## composite profile of a continent

Photo - Musée de l'Homme, Paris

## *The man in the bird's beak*

TREASURES OF WORLD ART

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*El Salvador*

During its Classic period (4th to 9th centuries A.D.), Maya civilization stretched from its heartland in the Petén lowlands of Guatemala to Palenque in southern Mexico and Copán in Honduras. The Mayas were outstanding sculptors, fashioning works whose realism, elegance and minute detail contrast strongly with the simplicity and abstract forms of the sculptures produced during the same period by the Olmec and Teotihuacán civilizations of Mexico. Above, flattened head of a man set in a bird's beak. Carved by a Mayan sculptor from a block of granite 23.5 cm. high, it was discovered in El Salvador.

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EL SALVADOR: The man in the bird's beak

Photo Barbosa © Rapho, Paris
Photo montage, Studio Picto, Paris

## Cover

**The fusion of different cultures is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the vast Latin American continent. This far-reaching creative process, which is still going on today, began with the Spanish conquest. Iberian and African cultures confronted and intermingled with those of the great indigenous civilizations to form a unique amalgam. This issue of the *Unesco Courier* examines some major aspects of Latin America's original cultural identity. Cover shows a Brazilian mulatto girl against the background of a brightly coloured painting on bark, the product of an art of which the Mexican Indians are past masters.**

**Is it possible to speak of a specifically Latin American culture? And if so, how did it develop, in the vast Latin American melting pot of peoples and ways of life? The *Unesco Courier* has invited some of Latin America's leading writers and thinkers to try to answer these vital questions and to define the unique cultural identity of their continent.**

**Unesco's interest in what Simon Bolivar once dubbed this "extraordinary and complex" continent goes back many years. In 1967 it launched a wide-ranging study programme on Latin American cultures, whose results have been published in Spanish in a number of volumes under the general title *América Latina en su Cultura* ("Latin America Within its Culture"; see page 70).**

**The *Unesco Courier* has already devoted two special issues to Latin America: "Latin America: 150 Years of Independence" in June 1961, and "Latin America's Cultural Explosion" in March 1972.**

# LATIN AMERICA

## The long journey to self-discovery

***by Leopoldo Zea***

OUR position as Latin Americans is, as the Liberator Simon Bolívar (1783-1830) put it, a most extraordinary and complicated one: "We are neither Europeans nor Indians, but a species midway between the native inhabitants and the Spaniards."

Such is the uniqueness and complexity of Latin America and its culture. It is a culture which arose from the coming together, without mutual assimilation, of separate cultures. Instead of merging, they opposed one another, and what was supposedly superior was juxtaposed with what was considered inferior. The relationship that was perpetuated between Europeans and Americans was that of lords and serfs, conquerors and conquered, colonizers and colonized.

For the mestizo—the person of mixed blood—this cultural and racial relationship was interiorized, and resulted in inner conflict—the conflict of a man whose blood and culture flowed from both the conqueror and the bastard offspring. He was looked upon as a bastard not just because of his blood but also because of his culture, or simply because he was born in America and not in Europe.

Indeed, for the Spaniard born in Spain, there was no difference between the creole, the legitimate son of the colonizer, and the mestizo born of European father and Indian mother. The person born in Latin America knew that Europeans considered him an inferior, while the Indians saw him as an exploiter, a henchman of the colonizer.

"Americans by birth and Europeans by right", Bolívar added, "we find ourselves caught up in a conflict: we contest the natives' rights of possession and defend our position in the country where we were born against the invaders... Though we were all born of the same Mother, our fathers are foreigners, by blood and by origin, and the colour of their skin is different. This dissimilarity has very serious consequences, for we are made to do continual penance for it."

Photo Silvester © Rapho, Paris

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**LEOPOLDO ZEA,** *Mexican philosopher and writer, is professor of the philosophy of history and the history of ideas in America at the Autonomous National University, Mexico City. He also heads the Centre for Latin American Studies at the university's faculty of philosophy and letters. Among his works published in English are:* The Latin American Mind *(1963) and* Latin America and the World *(1969), both published by the University of Oklahoma Press.*

An intermingling of cultures or a juxtaposition of cultures? These are the terms of the dilemma confronting Latin Americans as they seek to define their cultural identity. Ever since the Spanish conquest, different cultures—those of the conquistador, the defeated and exploited indigenous population, and the African slave—have met, juxtaposed and interpenetrated one another. The result has been the gradual development of forms of cultural expression which are complex and sometimes contradictory, but authentic and vigorous, as can be seen in countless works of art scattered throughout the length and breadth of the continent. Yet even today the Indians are not totally integrated into this culture which they have helped to create. Below, Indian women wait patiently in front of San Francisco de la Paz Cathedral (Bolivia). On the wall behind them, Indian motifs blend harmoniously with the Spanish colonial-style architecture.

Photo Silvester © Rapho, Paris

# Plaza of Three Cultures

Such was the position of the Latin American: this perpetual inner conflict led to a sense of uneasiness, which he felt just as much towards his father's people as towards his mother's. Rejected by the one, he was ashamed to belong to the other. He began by accepting the attitudes of the colonizer towards his maternal American culture and looked on his own mixed race as a mark of inferiority, which prevented him from feeling that he legitimately belonged to the paternal culture.

His mixed heritage, instead of being a positive factor, became the source of all the ambiguity and ambivalence which permeate the history of his culture. He oscillated between what he was and what he would like to belong to.

The attempt to impose a highly admired but alien model on a past felt to be unworthy gave rise to a philosophy of history which is the opposite of the European philosophy of history. It is a philosophy based on a juxtaposition and not an assimilation of cultures.

But it was this very juxtaposition that eventually made Latin Americans realize the inevitability of the cultural fusion that came to be the basis of Latin America's cultural identity. In other words the men who formed Latin American culture had to assimilate different cultures, creating, as Bolívar put it, a culture that is both extraordinary and complex.

The source of this extraordinary cultural complexity can thus be traced to a history of colonial domination. Whether we like it or not, this past must be taken into account if the much-needed change we desire is to be brought about.

For what we need is to change the relation of dependency which has been the root cause of all our problems—a pattern of colonial domination which, contrary to what happened in Europe, made genuine cultural integration impossible.

For European culture grew out of a process of exchange, as multifarious peoples moved back and forth across the various regions that came to be Europe. Greco-Roman culture was one product of this process, later being assimilated by Christianity, which in turn culminated in the European or Western culture which, from the 16th century onwards, spread to America and the rest of the world.

The European colonizers tried to prevent any further transculturation (even though their own culture was the result of this process), for they felt themselves superior to other peoples.

But European and Western imperialism was very different from that of the Greeks and Romans, who assimilated cultures just as they annexed the gods of other peoples to their pantheon.

When the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the 16th century, they were prepared to take over the inhabitants of the newly-discovered lands provided they gave up their own culture.

The evangelizers were willing to assimilate these creatures—or *homunculi* (little men), as Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda called them in his polemic with Bartolomé de Las Casas (see *Unesco Courier,* June 1975)—provided that they would relinquish forever a past which had more to do with the devil than with God. They must let themselves be cleansed of their sins, stripped of a false history and culture and led to the culture that God Himself had created.

In this way, the culture of the conqueror and colonizer was superimposed on the "devilish" indigenous cultures. Christian churches were raised on the sites of ancient temples, and the old idols were replaced by the cross, statues of the Virgin or of a Christian saint.

The same thing happened during the second wave of conquest and colonization in the 17th century, this time from all of Western Europe. These men likewise ruled out any form of assimilation, although their own culture was the result of an extraordinary degree of assimilation. Like their predecessors, their attitude was one of domination: to assimilate without being assimilated. Their mission was to bring civilization to the barbarians.

But this time, the barbarians were not only the original inhabitants and the mestizos but also the very same European settlers who had made racial intermingling possible and whose culture was considered outdated in relation to the new Western culture that was rapidly expanding.

The new representatives of Western culture would have nothing to do with racial intermingling, for to mix was to debase, to contaminate. That is why the so-called inferior cultures, such as those found in North America, were simply wiped off the map and their members exterminated or rounded up. And what could not be stamped out because of the sheer size of the population, as in South America, Asia and Africa, was belittled so as to make any contamination or assimilation impossible.

And the "natives" were not incorporated into civilization as human beings but, as Arnold Toynbee pointed out, as part of the flora and fauna of the land. They were called *naturales* in Spanish, because they were considered to be part of a nature that had to be subdued and utilized for the sake of civilization.

Bolívar clearly expressed the relation between Latin America and Western European culture when he said: "Let us be aware that our people are not European, nor North American, but a mixture of Africa and America rather than a product of Europe; for even Spain itself—with its African blood, its institutions and its character—is not European. It is impossible to properly define to what human family we belong."

And yet the particular character of Latin America did begin to express itself despite the pattern of imposed cultural norms and the servile imitation of outside models. In the Christian churches built on the sites of native temples, the devil, who was to be extirpated, popped up in forms created by Indian artists following the instructions of the conquistadors and evangelizers. The Indians danced in front of the crosses, Virgins and Christian saints just as they had once danced for their own gods.

In the baroque art that still adorns the churches, one can see the faces of the native artists and admire their feeling for colour. Even though the pantheon of Maya, Aztec, Inca and various other gods had officially disappeared, their spirit is nonetheless evident in the various cultural forms of the colonial period.

The year 1810 marked the beginning of the struggle for the liberation of Latin America and it symbolizes the Latin Americans' inability to keep faith with their Iberian cultural and historical past. Though they considered that past as their own, the arrogance and intolerance of the Portuguese and Spanish, and especially the latter, vetoed any pretension to political or cultural equality between Americans and Europeans.

As far as the metropolitan Spaniards were concerned, everyone born in America was racially and culturally inferior. The people of America were seen not as the children of the Spanish conquest but as its bastards and, therefore, as men without rights.

The Americans could elude but not change this distinction, which was rigorously enforced. And so they were forced to draw away from Spain. They had no option but to renounce a culture which prepared men only for servitude.

Again, Simón Bolívar expressed the feeling of rejection experienced by Latin Americans: "Within the Spanish system, the Americans have no place in society other than as servants or at best as consumers." The only culture available to these men was one designed to make them into efficient servants.

When the Spaniards rejected their demands for equality, these men had to

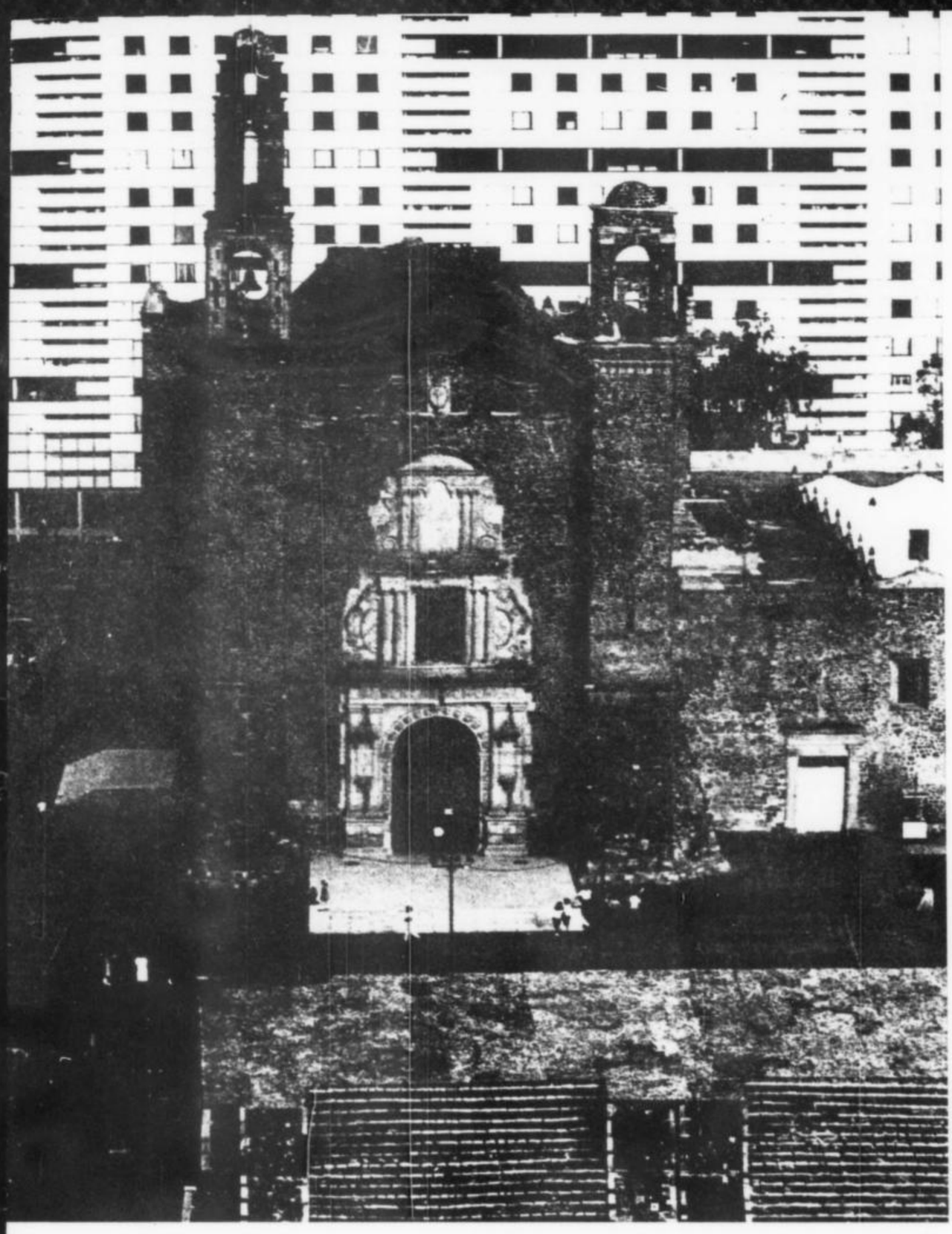

Photo © Fulvio Roiter, Venice, Italy

**History is telescoped in the "Square of Three Cultures" in Mexico City: foreground, remains of an Aztec pyramid; centre, a 17th-century Spanish church in the Jesuit style; background, modern apartment blocks.**

improvise as "legislators, magistrates, treasury administrators, diplomats, generals and the whole gamut of authorities, from the highest to the lowest, which make up the hierarchy of a properly organized state."

But there were two mutually exclusive ways of improvising, and it was the conflict between them that lay at the root of the long struggle which ravaged the whole of Spanish America after its emancipation from colonialism.

One way was to preserve the same political and cultural order that had allowed Spain to keep its control for three centuries, by simply placing it in the service of those who considered themselves its heirs: the creoles, the land barons. They who had once governed in the name of metropolitan Spain would now exercise authority in their own name. This meant perpetuating what the Chilean Diego Portales (1793-1827) called the long "weight of the night": that is, the long colonial night with all its customs, institutions and culture.

For, culturally speaking, there was a Spanish past as well as a colonial past to be assimilated. Spanish culture, like Spanish history, was also that of the Spaniards in America. This was the view of the Venezuelan writer and statesman Andrés Bello (1781-1865) who showed that the drive for emancipation on the part of the Spanish-Americans was actually a genuinely Spanish response. Those who had confronted the French troops at Saragossa were the same men who had fought against the metropolitan Spanish troops at Cartagena, in Colombia. The metropolitan Spanish troops had been defeated in various places in Latin America by insurgent armies who were equally Spanish.

To appropriate Hispanic culture and keep it alive would be to keep alive the very being of Latin America. Spain, in spite of itself, had left expressions of its culture which the Latin Americans could make their own. There was no need, in that case, to improvise: it was merely a question of assimilating, learning and putting into practice. These were the major concerns of the conservative programme.

In opposition stood those who chose the second way: they wanted nothing more to do with a past and a culture that had made them subservient either to metropolitan Spain or to those who presented themselves in America as its legitimate heirs. If they had to improvise, then they preferred to improvise something different. If knowledge and experience were required, then they could be sought in other experiences and other cultures. Bolívar himself demanded a total break with a social, political and cultural order within which the Americans could only have the role of servants.

Since they had nothing to call their own, the Latin Americans could turn to more relevant cultural models and experiences and make them their own. And what could be more relevant than the experiences of the men who had created the nations which were now showing the way to the rest of the world. These were the very nations which had relegated the Iberian world and its culture to a backwater and disputed its conquests. And so the long colonial past was false and had to be got rid of.

There was nothing for it but to start again from scratch, making up for lack of experience by taking over foreign models. The supporters of this project saw the Indian, Spanish and mestizo past as the expression of a barbarism which civilization would have to tame.

And just as the Iberian conquistadors and colonizers tried to bury the old Indian cultures and replace them with their own, so the Latin-American civilizers tried to bury the colonial past, both Spanish and Indian, as well as the racial intermixing of the colonial period.

They decided to imitate the cultural models of Western Europe: the political institutions of Britain and the literary and philosophical movements of France. The democratic institutions of the United States which had so surprised de Tocqueville were also to be adopted.

The goal of the civilization programme was to be like England, France and the United States and to eradicate the Latin American past because it was considered to be alien. The political emancipation achieved by the liberators was to be followed by what the civilizers called "mental emancipation".

To stop being what one is in order to become something different—such was the major preoccupation of this new cultural movement in Latin America. "Let us recognize the tree by its fruits", the Argentinian writer Domingo F. Sarmiento (1811-1888) declared: "South America will be left behind and will lose its providential mission as a branch of modern civilization. Let us not stand in the way of the forward advance of the United States... Let us catch up with the United States. Let us be America as the sea is the ocean. Let us be United States... Call yourselves the United States of South America, and a sense of human dignity and a noble desire for emulation will make you worthy of that great name."

How was this to be achieved? Through education and through massive immigration. Brainwashing and bloodwashing. This was the aim of an education which took its inspiration from French positivism, English utilitarianism and North American pragmatism. Justo Sierra (1848-1912) believed that the Mexicans should become the yankees of South America.

Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810-1884) also spoke of Spanish-American yankees. The civilizers would have no truck with the past, with boorish Spain, the servile negro or the savage Indian. They had an even

**CONTINUED PAGE 69**

# THE BLACKS IN LATIN

## Africa's imprint on the art and life of another continent

***by Alejo Carpentier***

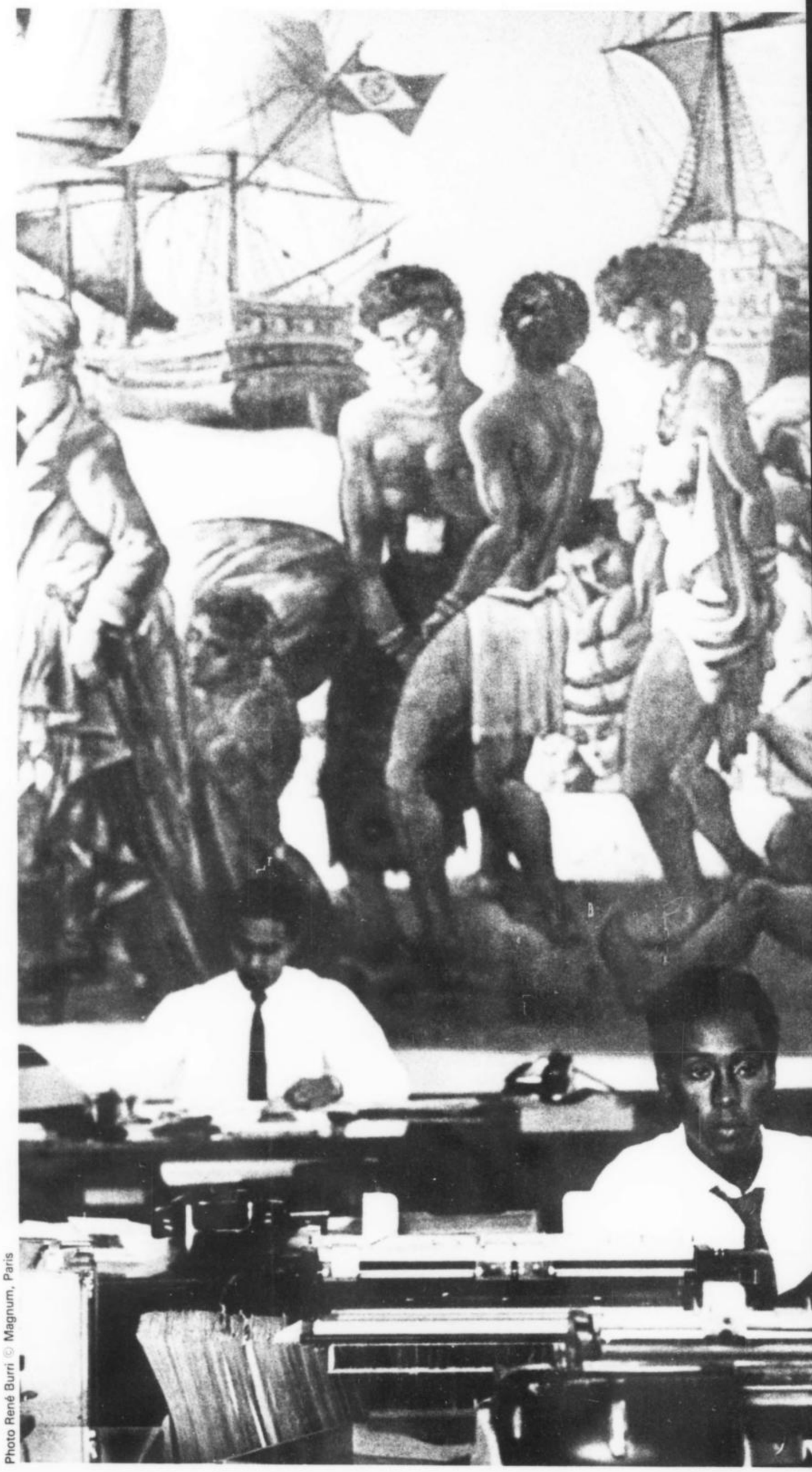

Photo René Burri © Magnum, Paris

IN the year 1441, ten natives of northern Guinea were taken to Portugal as a "present" for King Henry the Navigator from Antam Gonçalves, a merchant-traveller who had brought them with him simply as exotic curiosities, just as he might have brought a few parrots or some rare plants back from the tropics.

Soon—all too soon—Europeans realized that these "tropical oddities" might make a tremendous labour force, and within three years 235 African men, women and children had been forcibly taken to Portugal "in order", as a pious chronicler of the time noted, "to save their souls, which were hopelessly lost."

Thus it was that black slaves in ever greater numbers came to do domestic work in the palaces and farmwork on the domains of wealthy landowners. This was the start of the abominable slave-trade which was to take on such staggering proportions with the discovery of America. It was Charles V, King of Spain and Emperor of Austria, who in 1518 gave official status, as it were, to this traffic by

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**ALEJO CARPENTIER** *of Cuba is one of Latin America's leading novelists. His many books have been translated into 22 languages and include, in English editions:* The Kingdom of this World *(1957),* The Lost Steps *(1957) published by Knopf, New York,* Explosion in a Cathedral *(Gollancz, London, 1963) and* Reasons of State *(Partridge, London, 1976). A musicologist, Carpentier is the author of* A History of Cuban Music *(1949). He was for some years director of Cuba's national publishing house in Havana and professor of the history of music at the National Conservatory, Havana. He is currently Counsellor for Cultural Affairs at the Cuban Embassy in Paris.*

# AMERICA

**African slaves and the caravels that transported them to the New World dominate a huge mural, below left, in an office in Bahia (Brazil). Along with the Iberian conquistadors, the blacks were to create a new form of culture in the Caribbean, Brazil and other parts of Latin America. Black artists in the New World lost touch with purely African art forms, but family resemblances to the African tradition have survived in the work of such artists as the Cuban mestizo painter Wifredo Lam. His monumental canvas *The Jungle,* which created a furore when shown in New York in 1943, has been seen as the first painting to express the Third World's awareness of the need to pool all the world's cultures. Below, in his canvas *Presencia Eterna* (Eternal Presence) painted in 1944, Lam returned to some of the major themes of *The Jungle.***

Photo © André Morain, Paris. Private Coll., U.S.A.

authorizing the transportation of 4,000 African slaves to the islands of Hispaniola (Santo Domingo), Cuba, Jamaica and Puerto Rico.

Even before that time, the custom of using black slaves had spread throughout Spain in imitation of what was being done in Portugal. (Cervantes alludes to the practice in his *Exemplary Tales).* In this way, many blacks found their way to the New World, and especially to the Antilles, which were already being colonized long before the slave-trade actually became established as a large-scale commercial enterprise.

The *Catálogo de Pasajeros a Indias,* or list of passengers embarking for the Indies, in the Casa de la Contratación in Seville, is an invaluable source of information about population movements in 16th-century Spain. In its pages are the names of those who first sought passage to "the recently discovered lands on the other side of the Occeana Sea." Among its entries, one finds:

"5 February, 1510. Francisco, a black man." (Francisco was the first one of his race to apply and was assigned number 38.); "27 February, 1512. Rodrigo de Ovando, a black freedman; April 1512. Pedro and Jorge, slaves (travelling with their masters); August 1512. Cristina, a black woman, and her daughter Inès."

The list goes on and on, with the names of many slaves, freedmen, *loros* (those with particularly dark skin), mulattoes (with skin "the colour of stewed pears") and curious cases like that of one "Juan Gallego, a black, born in Pontevedra, Galicia," who embarked on 10 November, 1517, though the record does not specify whether he was a slave or a free man.

With the slave-trade now firmly established by both the Spanish and the Portuguese, the number of blacks shipped to America began to grow in geometric proportion till they gradually formed one of the basic ethnic components of the population.

The Europeans who had children by Indian women, plus the new African elements, soon gave rise to the *criollo* (creole) class, which is basic to the interpretation and general understanding of the history of Latin America.

The word *criollo* first appeared in a geographical study by Juan López de Velazco, published in Mexico between 1571 and 1574. "Spaniards who go out to those parts" (that is, America) "and stay there any length of time, necessarily undergo some colour and personality changes as a result of differences in temperature and climate; but those who are born there are called *criollos,* and although they are considered and held to be Spaniards, they are obviously different in complexion and build."

Silvestre de Balboa, in a poem written in Cuba in 1608, refers to a black slave as a creole. Another poet, Garcilaso de la Vega, known as "the Inca" because his mother was a princess of the royal line of the Incas, wrote in 1617: "The Spanish call those born in the New World *criollos,* whether their parents are Spaniards or Africans."

Sensing the danger implicit in this neologism, the Spanish Crown tried for a while to prohibit its use in any document, report or legal text, but the word continued to be used to designate a type of human being that had arisen in America and was taking on characteristics of its own, with variations according to the region and to the ethnic components responsible for its formation.

In the Antilles and along the coasts of Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil—with outposts as far north as the Mississippi basin—these people were to be strongly marked by their African origins, and in some of the Caribbean islands the black population eventually outnumbered the Europeans.

Around 1920, Paris experienced what Jean Cocteau, the French poet and painter, did not hesitate to describe in alarm as the "negro crisis". Picasso had painted *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* in 1907, obviously influenced by certain African art objects which had aroused his enthusiasm, as they had that of Matisse and Derain. They and others, like the poet Apollinaire, started collecting what they dubbed "negro art". Galleries were filled with sculpture, carvings, masks and all kinds of objects from the African continent whose history and creations were quite unknown.

To lump all this together and call it "negro art" was as preposterous as putting the label "white art" on a collection of, say, Greek Venuses, Renaissance marbles, medieval gargoyles and Calder mobiles.

After these art objects, a whole oral

# Spontaneous art and voodoo rites in Haiti

Photo Burt Glinn © Magnum, Paris

tradition arrived in Europe. Spoken, recited and sung, it was a literature in which magic and religion alternated with more or less epic tales, cosmogonic legend, beast fables, proverbs and simple stories meant to entertain or edify the listeners.

This literary corpus, gathered here and there by explorers and missionaries, began to be published in collections of "negro literature". (Needless to say, the term "negro", as usual, failed to make any distinction between the various ethnic groups, or degrees of cultural development). The best known of these is Blaise Cendrars' famous *Anthology,* translated into 20 languages and still to be found in bookshops the world over.

So now there was "negro art" and "negro literature"; the only thing missing was "negro music". It soon put in its appearance.

Jazz made its spectacular entrance on the scene shortly after World War I. Stravinsky was enchanted with this novelty, just as Picasso had previously been enthusiastic about masks from Dahomey, and he composed a piece entitled *Piano Rag Music,* followed by *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments.*

A key work embodying the spirit of the times was Darius Milhaud's ballet *The Creation of the World,* composed in 1923. The music uses the syncopated beat and runs of jazz, and the story, by Cendrars, is based on an ancient African legend about how the world began. Since the stage sets and costumes had to match the rest of the work, the painter Fernand Léger did his best to convey the spirit of African objects.

A serious misunderstanding arose, however, and it was to become the source of many later errors. The first two pieces of jazz to become hits in Europe were "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and "Saint Louis Blues", but European fans did not seem to realize that the latter had been written by a black musician from New Orleans named Christopher Handy, and that the former was the work of a free-style white composer named Irving Berlin.

In other words, such elaborated jazz had very little in common with African music. It was an authentically creole product that had its source in a racial intermingling that had been going on for a long time in the New World.

As Deborah Morgan so aptly commented in the review *Musique en Jeu:* "The history of jazz began in 1619 when a Dutch frigate landed in Jamestown, Virginia, with the first blacks sent to work in North America. For jazz is not a type of music that sprang up somewhere around 1900 in New Orleans, as a die-hard legend holds; it is the result of a three-hundred-year confrontation between two communities, one which came from Africa and the other from Europe."

It is curious to note that Cuban popular music acquired its own specific features about the same time, that is, in the early 17th century, though they were of course quite different. Cuban rhythms scarcely resembled jazz, but they spread through the world in the early 1930s, whereas Brazilian music began to be known outside Brazil only just before World War II.

If jazz is totally different from the African musical forms with which we are now familiar, so is the music of Cuba and Brazil. Blacks have indeed contributed greatly to the development of all these musical forms, but any similarity to what is heard in the African countries has disappeared. The Cuban cha-cha-cha, the Dominican *plena,* the beguine of Santa Lucia and Martinique, the calypso and steel bands of Barbados and Trinidad, the samba and bossa nova of Brazil, like the boogie-woogie and free jazz of North America, have nothing in common with the scholarly recordings of African folk music or the careful notations made by ethnographers.

What has happened is that the black man, cut off from Africa, has changed. As Franz Fanon, an expert on the subject, pointed out: "There is as much difference between a Haitian and someone from Dakar as there is between a Brazilian and an inhabitant of Madrid."

This leads us to an observation on the creative activity of the displaced African living in North or South America. When he is forced from his homeland, he seems to lose his feeling for the plastic arts.

But what he forfeits as a sculptor, carver or painter, he gains as a musician. A transfer of energy takes place within him. And though we may admire some statuettes or drawings he turns out today—

**In recent years, a group of black and mulatto artists has created an authentic school of "spontaneous" or "primitive" painting in Haiti, in other islands of the Antilles and in Venezuela. Below left, work by an artist from Haiti, where ancient African rites such as voodoo (below) are still practised, especially in rural areas. Voodoo, which originated in what is now Dahomey, was introduced to the island in the 18th and 19th centuries by slaves brought by the French. Since then, local beliefs as well as elements of the Catholic liturgy have been added.**

Photo Eve Arnold © Magnum, Paris

such as the "signatures", or graphic symbols, of the Abakuá groups in Cuba, the *vevés* drawn at the foot of the voodoo altars in Haiti, or the small wrought-iron figures used in *candomblé* rites in Brazil—none has the force, the originality or the technical mastery of an art that was left behind and slowly forgotten.

On the other hand, the greatest composers of this century, in both Europe and America, have drawn inspiration for major works from the extraordinarily inventive music written by blacks in the most widely different regions of the New World.

This apparent loss of their original plastic sense can be explained by the fact that sculpture, carving and decorative painting required free time, which the slave-holder was not prepared to grant.

He was not going to place workshops and tools at the disposal of men who were there to increase his wealth, simply so that they could have the pleasure of carving figures that he considered barbaric idols and repositories of ancestral beliefs.

On the contrary, any such recollections had to be wiped from the black man's memory with the help of the overseer's lash. "Civilized man" in the West did not yet have the slightest interest in what he would later come to value as "folk art".

While the black man's paintings or carvings were considered works of the Devil, music, on the other hand, did not cause much inconvenience. The plantation owners in Cuba, for example, allowed their slaves to beat their drums and dance every evening because this showed that they were in good health and that their "ebony flesh" was fit for hard labour.

Meanwhile, the slaves listened to what they heard around them. During the 16th century, when they were first taken to America, they assimilated Spanish ballads, songs from Portugal and even French square dancing. They discovered musical instruments unknown in their own lands and learned to play them.

If one of them succeeded in being freed by a master who was more benevolent than others—for slavery as an institution was only abolished by degrees in the Americas—he might well turn to music as a way of earning his living, mingling with white people in a kind of occupational freemasonry. As the Cuban essayist José Antonio Saco noted in 1831: "Music enjoys the prerogative of bringing blacks and whites together; in orchestras, no distinction is made between whites, browns and blacks."

Far removed from his African roots, the black man in Latin America became a basic constituent, together with the Indian, of the creole class that was to affect the destiny of a whole continent with its aspirations, its struggles and its protest. As the centuries went by, the blacks were slowly incorporated into the society of

their new homelands and, little by little, they recovered their poetic sense and the feeling for the plastic arts which they seemed to have lost.

Observing ancestral traditions that no longer bore any relation to their surroundings was now out of the question. The black peoples had forgotten their African dialects by this time and spoke only the major languages of the New World. They felt no need to revive old Yoruba tales, to recall ancient legends or return to the sources of an oral culture they were alienated from, but rather to "make poetry" in the full sense of the term. (1)

The same thing happened in painting. Black artists in the New World were completely out of touch with art forms that in Africa were related to religious cults now left far behind (even though some vestiges can still be found on altars ostensibly consecrated to Christian saints).

On the contrary, they had to solve the same technical problems that face artists everywhere in any period. It is obvious then that the work of the black and mestizo painters and sculptors active in Latin America in the 19th century bore no resemblance whatsoever to the forms and stylizations of African art.

This was also true of poetry at that time. And one may add that there were many "white" writers—the word "white" has always been quite relative in Latin America—who published novels with "negro" settings, denouncing the loathsome aspects of slavery in the Americas.

It is only in the last 50 years that a new generation of poets and painters has appeared, whose works are marked by the symbiosis of cultures fostered by the New World.

There has been much talk, for example, of "black poetry", referring to a resonant, percussive, onomatopoeic type of poetry which, despite a prevalent assumption, has often been written by perfectly "white" poets, like the Cuban Emilio Ballagas or the Venezuelan Manuel Felipe Rugeles.

In point of fact, this is an exotic view of "negritude". The truth is that if "black poetry" as such ever existed, it would have had to be a protest on behalf of the black people oppressed by centuries of slavery and racial discrimination.

First and foremost, it would have had to be a revolutionary cry because, since the 16th century, the blacks have always been in revolt against their overlords in some part of the hemisphere, and even formed small independent states in Brazil, the Guyanas and Jamaica—states that sometimes survived for many years.

The blacks of Latin America never resigned themselves to their status as slaves: there were countless uprisings and escapes. The rebellion organized in Venezuela in the 16th century by Black Miguel, and the liberation movements in Haiti in the 18th century—admirably led by Toussaint Louverture—were forerunners of the great wars of independence soon to be fought in Latin America.

Never during their long history in the New World did the blacks give up their quest for freedom, a quest furthered by the creoles of all classes and stations who, after much struggling, finally threw off the yoke of Spanish, Portuguese, French and English colonialism.

**'Never did the blacks give up their quest for freedom in the New World'**

It was a typically creole thought that Montesquieu, in 1721, put in the mouth of a black from the Antilles: "Why should I work for a society that I don't wish to belong to? Why should I abide by a covenant made without my being consulted?"

Because he is a creole, and also educated in the best classical traditions, the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén was able to write poetry which took as its metrical basis the rhythms of the Cuban *son,* a musical form with strong creole influence. His verses plunge their roots not into African soil but into well-cultivated ground broken centuries before by Lope de Vega and Luis de Góngora in Spain, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in Mexico in what they chose to call "poems of blacks."

If there is a kind of poetry that can properly be called creole, it is that of Guillén who, in any case, does not confine himself within the narrow limits of any particular style. Whether he is writing his classical poems or the resounding first verses of *Motivos del Son* or *Songoro Cosongo,* he is Cuban through and through.

Similarly in painting: Wifredo Lam's monumental canvas *The Jungle,* a compendium of the plant life and forms peculiar to the magical environment of the Caribbean, is the work of a mestizo painter who has a truly creole sensibility and whose painting occupies a special place in the panorama of modern art.

In Venezuela, Haiti and the small islands of the Antilles, there is currently developing an authentic school of "spontaneous" or "primitive" painters who have been doing extraordinary things since the 1940s.

Their work constitutes another contribution to Latin American painting in general, without a trace of any ancestral African tradition other than a common fondness for bright, lively colours, which stems more from individual temperament than from a hereditary predisposition.

In short, there exist in the Antilles, where Spanish, English and French are spoken, literature and painting with a markedly creole character, and it would be difficult to say just what can be attributed to their various ethnic components.

The contribution of the blacks to the world where they were taken by force does not consist, therefore, in what has mistakenly been called "negritude". (If that were the case, we should also have to speak of the contribution of "whiteitude".) It is something much more important, namely, their creative sensibility.

The blacks brought with them a fresh energy that added a new dimension to both art and history in the New World. The creole class, formed of Indians and Europeans, did not reach maturity in America until it had the benefit of black sensibility.

From the blending of these three races—with greater Indian predominance in some regions and a more pronounced black strain in others—there arose a type of man who, with his music, art forms, poetry and novels, has won a place in the forefront of world culture.

■ **Alejo Carpentier**

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(1) It may be argued that the *Abakuá* and *Santería* groups in Cuba, the *Obeah* rite in Jamaica, and the voodoo of Haiti are authentic African survivals. But it could also be said that such vestiges, besides absorbing and being much influenced by small local cults, are destined to disappear in a few years, or else to be given a strong creole character. Such is the case of the voodoo sect, which has had a fresh crop of gods added to it, such as Criminel Petro, Erzulie and Marinette Bois-Cheche.

On other islands in the Antilles, African folklore has become a tourist attraction; "magic ceremonies" and "ritual dances" are performed for money. When folk art is for sale, it has long ceased to be authentic. Not to mention the fact that in a country like Cuba, the socialist system makes the old *nanigo* groups (secret mutual aid societies) completely superfluous.

**For four centuries, black Africa has exercised a strong influence in Brazil, alongside the Amerindians and the European colonizers. Black African cultures and peoples played a major part in the development of a new type of civilization, which is neither European nor African, but distinctively Brazilian. Below, an Afro-Brazilian family out for a stroll in Salvador de Bahia. On the walls in the background, scenes from the conquest and colonization of Brazil.**

Photo René Burri © Magnum, Paris

# THE AFRO-BRAZILIAN EXPERIMENT

***by Gilberto Freyre***

**GILBERTO FREYRE** *of Brazil is an internationally known authority on sociology and social and cultural anthropology. He has served as a consultant with the United Nations and Unesco on questions concerning racism and social tensions, and has taught in a number of American and European universities. His works translated into English include:* The Masters and the Slaves *(1956),* New World in the Tropics (1959) *and* The Mansions and the Shanties *(1966), all published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York.*

IT is an irrefutable historical fact that Brazil was initially a "pre-Brazil" —a historical and human outpost of Europe, and specifically of Portugal. But this is not enough to explain either Brazil's emergence as a new social and cultural entity in the modern world and its evolution as a cultural and social system based on coexistence.

# Rhythms of bondage

Photo © Abril Press, Brazil

The cultural "consolidation" of Brazil was a complex and far-reaching process brought about by an intermingling of both European and non-European elements. Of the latter, the Amerindian peoples and cultures have played an important and lasting part. But another non-European element was subsquently to share in the process: the black African.

From the 16th century on, black African cultures and peoples played a part in the formation of an ethnically mixed type of human being and a pre-national type of culture.

Their contribution was so dynamic, and their Africanizing influence so vigorous, that even though they had come as slaves to Brazil, the black Africans became colonizers, as it were, of this part of America. Alongside the European founders of the new culture, they came to outweigh the influence of the Brazilian Indians.

For four centuries now, the black African has made his presence felt from both a biological and cultural point of view. Intermingling has given rise to new types of human beings and new kinds of feminine beauty. Cultural intermixing has produced new cultural blends which have left their mark not only on the Amerindians, but also on the values which were imported from certain regions of Africa and from the Iberian Peninsula, the basic source of Brazilian colonization, which was itself already impregnated with black African influences.

To these ethnic and cultural contributions, one must add an ecological factor —the tropics. Inevitably, the tropics influenced the Brazilian, fostering a readiness to try bold experiments. This can be seen today in certain distinctive economic and governmental institutions, most of which are still at an experimental stage of development.

But when Brazil embarks on such experiments, this does not reflect anti-European feelings; it shows, rather, that Brazil is aware of the fact that in many areas of its social and cultural behaviour it must be non-European. This fact was stressed more than 50 years ago by Brazilian thinkers and social scientists who laid down sociological and anthropological guidelines which, while still universally valid, were nonetheless Brazilian and "Euro-tropical" in scope and outlook.

Brazil's experience can be useful to new nations in Africa, Asia and elsewhere for, after four centuries of pre-national and national development and more than a century of independence, Brazil is now emerging as a civilization in search of forms of expression suited to a tropical environment. This civilization does not, however, repudiate the European values which are so basic to Brazil's national heritage.

Brazil now boasts its own types of architecture, music, painting, cooking, Christianity, social life, attitudes towards health and hygiene, and football—a more dionysiac Brazilian kind of football than the apollonian English one. All of these express a new type of civilization whose novelty derives as much from racial intermingling as from an intermixing of cultures.

Influence of African religions can still be felt in the rhythms and mythological symbolism of Brazilian dances such as the *maracatu* (below left) and the *macumba* (see colour photo page 35). Dancing was one of the rare forms of expression allowed to the African slaves, from whose *senzalas* (slave houses) African cultures spread throughout Brazil. Below, a *senzala* at Olinda, today transformed into an antique shop.

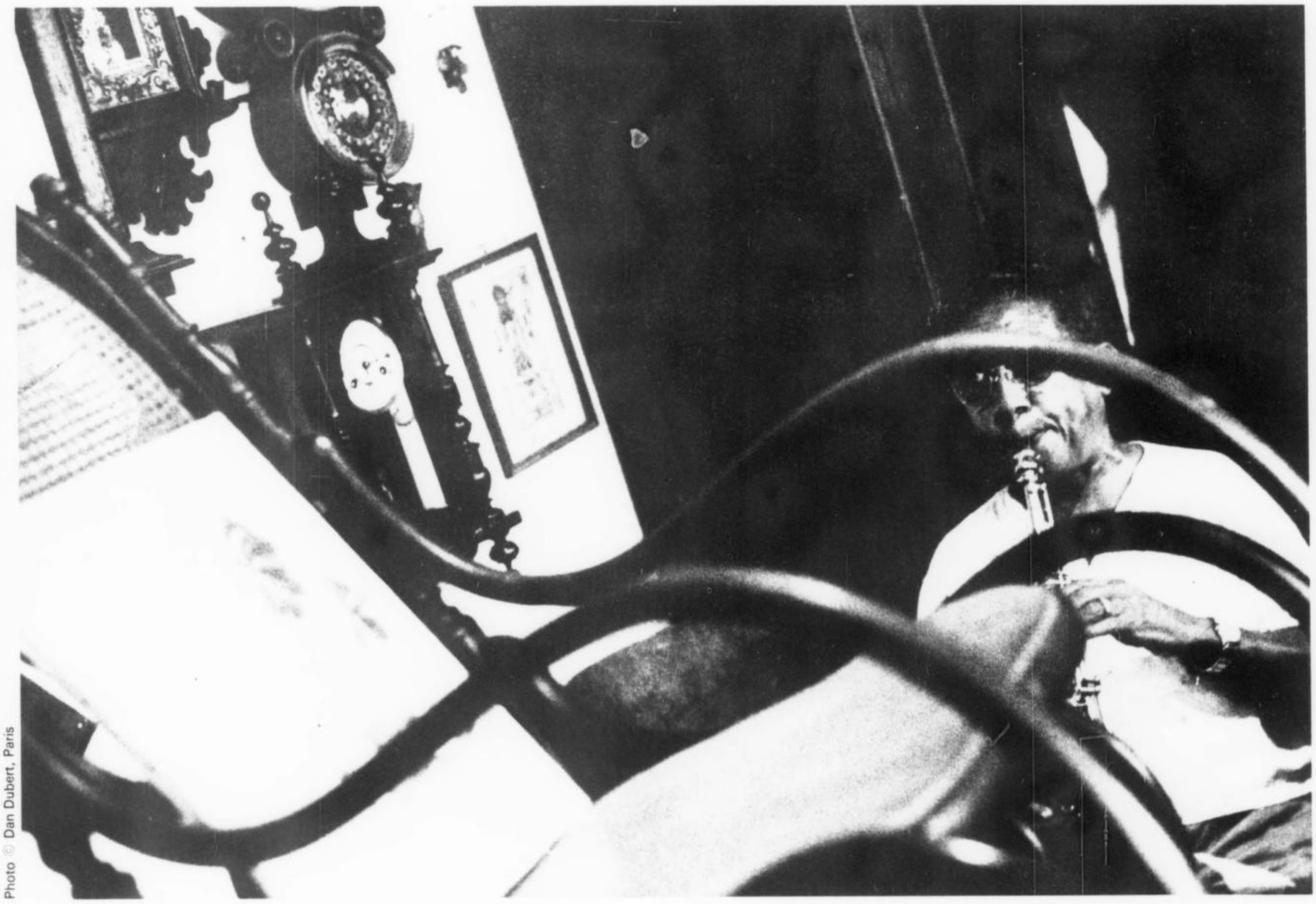

Photo © Dan Dubert, Paris

The black African has been integrated not only biologically, but also sociologically. A case in point is Brazilian Catholicism which is becoming a strongly Africanized religion: its officially Roman Catholic, and originally European, rites and symbolism are being transformed by the admixture of pure African religious beliefs and practices.

The cult of the Virgin Mary is an example of this: elements have been assimilated from the Yemanja cult (the female counterpart of Orixa, a secondary divinity in the African *jeje-nago* cult). Brazil has black Virgins like the Virgin of Rosario and mestizo Virgins like Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose devotees pledge themselves by offering ex-votos—wood and clay sculptures whose expression and colour symbolism are more African than European.

This African influence is also felt in the *maracatu,* a dance whose deeper meaning reveals a complex infiltration of African elements into the Brazilian religious spirit. Other examples of this infiltration are found in the many saint cults common in Brazilian Catholicism, such as those of St. George, St. Barbara or St. Damian.

Brazilians do not consider themselves less Catholic because elements of African rites or beliefs have been incorporated into their religious worship. Though their Catholicism is more tropical and less European, believers do not feel it has been corrupted or de-Christianized.

The same holds true for Brazilian cookery, music, sculpture and painting of European origin: African penetration represents not a corruption of values but an enrichment.

It is of course true that European colonization gave this new type of society and culture a means of communication—the Portuguese language, heir to the noble and prestigious Latin of ancient Rome. But it is also clear that none of the European languages imported into America is becoming so intensely "tropicalized" as Brazilian Portuguese.

This process, due in part to de-Europeanization, stems primarily from African influence, and only secondarily from Amerindian influence. As a literary language, it is no longer considered as inferior to the academic language of Portuguese purists.

Less and less academic, the Brazilian language is daily acquiring new rhythms and expressions whose musicality and forcefulness are deeply marked by their African origins. Not so long ago, however, these expressions were restricted to the vernacular and were considered plebeian, vulgar, "blacks' talk" or "slaves' talk".

What conclusions can be drawn from these observations about the importance of black or African elements in the society, culture and language of Brazil? One result seems to be that the people are becoming increasingly but not exclusively brown-skinned and that Brazil is witnessing the formation of an increasingly extra-European culture.

Segregationist attitudes such as exclusive Aryanism or exclusive "negritude" are

# Gods, legends and figureheads

countered in Brazil by a general move towards synthesis, whether biologically through intermingling or sociologically through the intermixing of cultures, some of which are more markedly non-European than European.

Today Brazil tends to look on its own independence—especially its political and economic independence, but also its social and cultural independence—as a result not so much of a sudden decolonization but rather of a rapid process of "self-colonization" (another sociological neologism coined in Brazil).

This self-colonization no doubt developed because Brazil found itself opposed to Portugal, which was less tentacular and less interventionist than other European colonial powers, and thus less able to impose its will. As a result Portugal was more apt to compromise and to let the people there practise self-colonization, allowing the African to become a partner in the process.

The Amerindian mestizo joined forces with the Portuguese and even outstripped them in this colonizing activity, as is shown by the great part played in the building of Brazil by the *bandeirantes,* associations formed to capture Indian slaves and to explore for mines. But most important was the part played by the black *ladinos,* slaves who spoke Portuguese and had some notions of Christian religion and domestic or agricultural practices. They worked alongside the Portuguese and even outdistanced them in many fields thanks to the ease with which they adapted to the Brazilian tropics. They withstood the difficult working conditions in the flooded or marshy Brazilian lands better than the wholly European settlers.

The fact that Brazil could express its creativity in a non-European way, even when it was still officially a Portuguese colony, explains some of the characteristics that distinguish Brazil from other decolonized countries.

Consider, for example, the sculpture of Antonio Francisco Lisbóa, better known as Aleijadhino (1730-1814): it seems to come straight from the tropics. It is no copy of a European style, but rather a bold and original Brazilian creation.

It is clear that in the aesthetic field Brazilians have special African connexions which differentiate them from other Latin Americans—even from those tropical American regions where the African influence is strong.

Photo © Abril Press, Brazil

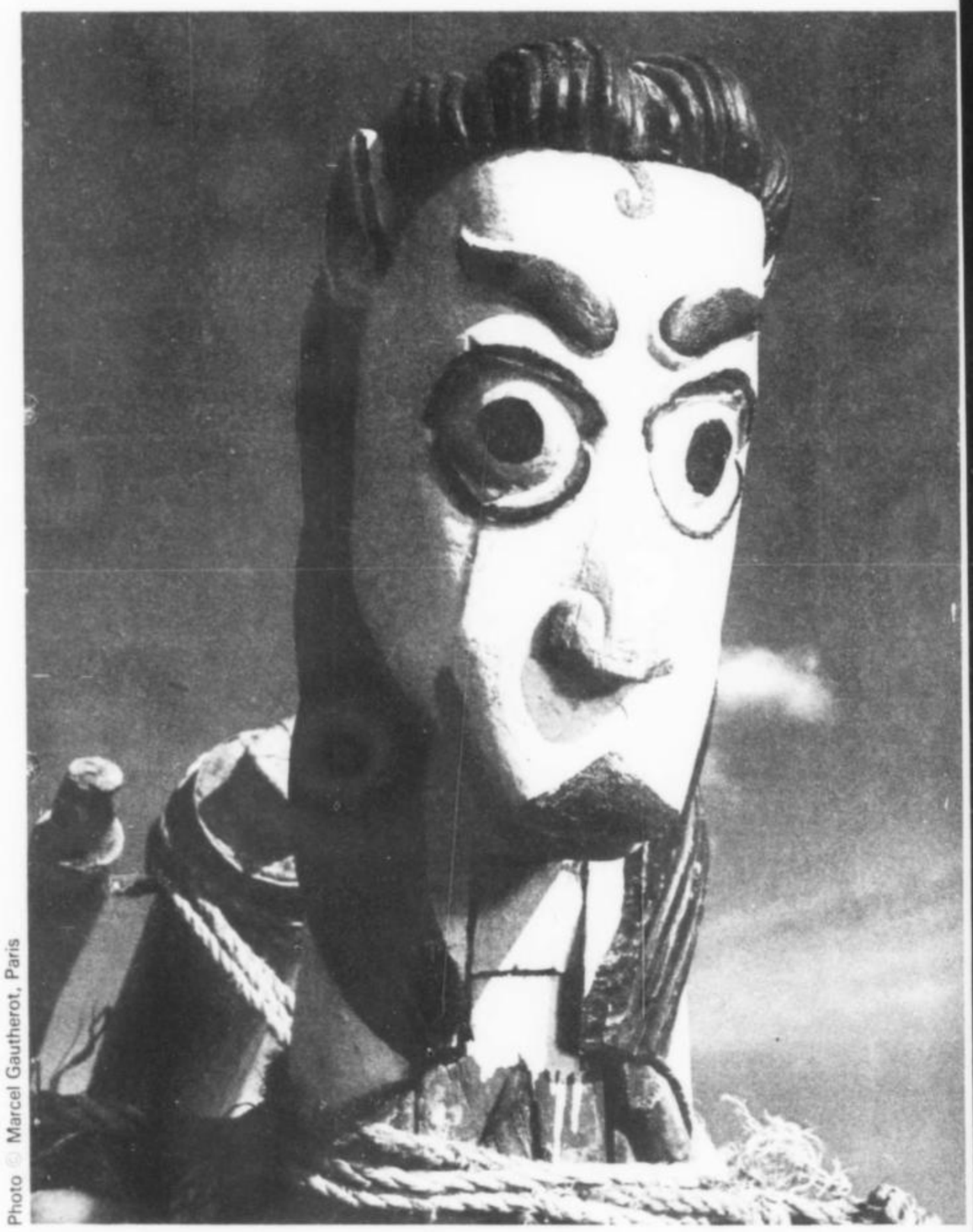

Photo © Marcel Gautherot, Paris

**African religious beliefs and practices have been incorporated into Catholic ritual in Brazil, where the cult of the Virgin Mary is strongly coloured by that of Iemanjá, a female divinity of Nigeria. Below left, the ceremony of the cult of Iemanjá. An Afro-Brazilian legend of the African divinity Oxosse is the theme of a ballet created by the choreographer Clyde Morgan. Below, a scene from the ballet performed by the Contemporary Dance Group of the Federal University of Bahia. Bottom left, a curious example of Brazilian folk art: one of the famous figureheads which decorate canoes on the San Francisco river.**

Photo Rivaldo C. Leite, from *Cultura* magazine, Ministry of Education and Culture, Brasilia

In Nigeria, for example, there is a Brazilian style in both architecture and in interior design; it even makes use of typically Brazilian animals and plants. A special Brazilian flavour has also crept into Nigerian cooking, dance, recreation, worship and folklore.

Some art critics see links between the works of the Spanish painter Joan Miró and those of the young Nigerian sculptor Jacob Afolabi. One good turn deserves another: was it not another giant of Spanish painting, Picasso, who developed African art forms and transmitted them to artists in Europe and elsewhere in the world?

Jacob Afolabi and other African artists have affinities not only with Picasso, but with Brazilian artists too. It seems clear that Nigerian artists today find something familiar in much authentically Brazilian art, something fraternally related to what they themselves consider to be art.

The Brazilian heritage explains why African artists like Afolabi are linked more closely to such Brazilian artists as Cíceros dos Santos Dias, Emiliano di Cavalcanti and Lulas Cardoso Ayres, than to artists like Miró. It also explains why the work of Nigerian craftsmen like Adebisi—who deliberately cultivates the so-called Brazilian-Nigerian style in his art—shows similarities with the painted pottery of a Brazilian artist like Francisco Brennand.

Does Brazilian artists' sensitivity to their African roots reflect an exclusive attachment to "negritude"? If so, then Brazilians of African descent would tend to draw away from Brazilians of different descent. Would this make for a "black Brazilian" like the black North American? Not at all, for Brazilians are conscious of the fact that they are brown-skinned people—"brown" here meaning every shade, up to and including black. Hence the Brazilian concept of "meta-race" or "going beyond race", which makes Brazilians unconcerned about ethnic origins: they do not affect one's status as a citizen.

Such concepts are of immense importance for anthropologists and sociologists because they prove that it is not colour or race which makes a man what he is, but rather his personal tastes, motives and outlook—including artistic ones.

In Brazilian folklore there is no lack of idealized or romanticized African figures. They have been incorporated into Brazil's essentially patriarchal society. Among them are such figures as the *mae preta* (black mother), the *ba* (nurse), the *negro velho* (old black man) and the *negrinho do*

**THE THREE RACES,** a canvas by the Brazilian painter Emiliano di Cavalcanti, symbolizes the harmony reigning between the ethnic groups that went to form the population of Brazil.

# WHERE GODS AND MEN HAVE MINGLED

***by Jorge Amado***

BRAZIL is a country of racial mixture. This is an obvious and incontrovertible fact. The Brazilian experiment is of immense importance in the search for a solution to the terrible racial problem that afflicts the world. For in Brazil the most diverse races have constantly been mingled.

What Brazilian could honestly claim to be of "pure" descent in a country where Iberians, Slavs, Anglo-Saxons, Magyars and others have become inextricably mixed with black and Amerindian peoples and with Arabs, Jews and Japanese?

This continuing process is the fundamental reality of life in Brazil, and represents our own special contribution to world culture and the humanist tradition.

We are a racially mixed people, and the mixture has depended as much on the contribution of the black as on that of the white. We owe to the black peoples some of our most outstanding characteristics: our ability, for example, to endure misery and oppression, to survive in the toughest conditions, and to love life and laughter.

*pastoreio* (a kind of good angel of the pampas).

Brazilian authors have been inspired by the figures of "Isaura the Slave" (Bernardo Guimaraes), the "mulatto" (Aluisio de Azevedo), the "good creole" (Isaias Caminha), "little black Ricardo" (José Lins do Regio), "Balduino" (Jorge Amado), "Falo the Black Girl" (Jorge de Lima). Nor should one forget the mulattoes of the painter Emiliano di Cavalcanti, who are sometimes of a pure black now so rare in Brazil after years of intermingling.

More has been written about the African influence on Brazilian music than on any other Brazilian art form. It is apparent not only in popular music but also in some of the country's most serious music. The composer Hector Villa Lobos (1887-1959) was influenced both by African and even more by Amerindian musical themes, which he considered basically Brazilian.

The cultural affinities between Brazil and Africa are, as we have seen, strong. But we must not forget that another factor, besides the historical one, has contributed to these similarities: a common tropical environment undergoing the process of modernization. It is important, though, that modernization must not turn these peoples against their environment and cut them off from the sources of their national cultures. This would risk reducing their national artistic and cultural forms to parodies of the modern art forms prevailing in economically and technologically advanced regions that now tend to dominate the cultures of the developing countries.

There is no question of rejecting European cultural elements, or even North American ones, for they can be adapted to non-European conditions. But there is also no question of turning Brazilians into sub-Europeans or sub-North Americans. What Brazil is trying to do may well provide valid examples for the young African nations, who may find that they can apply them to their new social and cultural situations.

■ **Gilberto Freyre**

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**JORGE AMADO,** *Member of the Brazilian Academy, is one of Latin America's most widely read novelists. Since the appearance of his novel* Mar Muerto *("Dead Sea", 1961), which won him a reputation throughout Latin America, he has published over 15 books that have been translated into some 30 languages. Among his more recent works published in English are* Gabriela *(Chatto and Windus, London, 1963) and* Doña Flor and Her Two Husbands *(Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1970).*

Photo © Dominique Desjardins, Paris

It is to them that we owe the unfailing joyfulness that inspires our efforts to fight against and defeat backwardness, poverty and the many obstacles on our path to development. We owe this toughness and fighting spirit to the black blood which flows not only in our veins but also in our music, dance and other forms of artistic expression.

The culture of Brazil was formed in the struggle against racism and was born of the mingling of whites, blacks and Amerindians. The black element in Brazilian society is inextricably mingled with the white, and Africa is a maternal presence in our midst.

But it would be ridiculous to claim that there are no racists in Brazil, for there are many. On the other hand, we do not have a racist philosophy of life: our outlook is fundamentally anti-racist, based as it is on intermingling.

The vigorous "negro" art of the sculptor Agnaldo da Silva, without equal in Brazil today, is not exclusively black. It bears traces of white and Iberian influences in both form and subject: Agnaldo's *Oxossi* is also St. George.

It is all the more unfortunate, then, that a distorted image of our way of life is sometimes presented abroad. The African contribution, which is of fundamental importance to Brazilian culture, is glossed over or pushed into the background.

This is a totally false approach. Through a curious reversal of the colonial mentality, there is a tendency to put the spotlight on painters, writers and singers with the blackest possible skins. This attempt to prove the absence of racial prejudice in Brazil actually indicates a preoccupation which is totally alien to the Brazilian philosophy of life.

The blackest girls are chosen to sing, but no attention is paid to the fact that they sing songs more strongly marked by Iberian than black influence, although Brazilian music derives primarily from the *atabiques* of Africa.

The paintings shown tend to be typical examples of the Paris School—the important thing is that the artists' skins are black. Brazilian painters like Tarsila and Di Cavalcanti are neglected, although their work displays the black African influences which, along with white, Amerindian and Japanese elements, have produced an art which is uniquely Brazilian.

We must proclaim to the world at large the tremendous importance of the African presence in Brazil, in our life, culture and in the faces of our people.

The black African has contributed to all the great achievements of Brazil. The presence of Africa with its sunlight and shadow can be felt in the prophets, saints and angels which the mestizo sculptor Aleijadinho (1730-1814) carved in the mining region of Minas Gerais.

Africa is present in the music of Villa Lobos and Dorival Caymini, in the *Orixas* and Madonnas of Agnaldo, in the poetry of Gregorio de Matos, Castro Alves and Vinicius de Moraes. It is present in the dancing, and the singing, the gentleness, the friendliness and the expansive imagination of everything great in Brazil.

For here in Brazil gods and men have, happily, become inextricably mingled.

■ **Jorge Amado**

Photo © Marino Benzi, Editions du Chêne, Paris

# The strains of solitude

**"All men are born disinherited and their true condition is orphanhood, but this is particularly true of the Indians and the poor in Mexico", Octavio Paz has written. The art of the Mexican Indians is imbued with this intense feeling of solitude, which can be traced back to their Aztec past.**

Aztec myths and Christian beliefs in Mexico

# A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

***by Octavio Paz***

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ANY contact with the Mexican people, however brief, reveals that ancient beliefs and customs are still in existence beneath Western forms. These still-living remains testify to the vitality of the cultures that existed before the Spanish conquest.

And after the discoveries of archeologists and historians, it is no longer possible to refer to those societies as savage or primitive tribes. Over and above the fascination or horror they inspire in us, we must admit that when the Spaniards arrived in Mexico they found complete and refined civilizations.

Meso-America—that is, the nucleus of what was later to be New Spain—was a territory that included the central and southern parts of present-day Mexico and a portion of Central America.

The last centuries of Meso-American history can be summed up as the history of repeated encounters between waves of northern hunters—almost all of them belonging to the Náhuatl family—and the settled populations.

The Aztecs were the last to enter the Valley of Mexico. The previous work of erosion by their predecessors, and the wasting away of the springs of the ancient local cultures, made it possible for them to accomplish the extraordinary task of founding what Arnold Toynbee calls a Universal Empire, based on the remains of older societies.

According to Toynbee, the Spaniards did nothing except act as substitutes, resolving through political synthesis the tendency towards dispersal that threatened the Meso-American world.

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**OCTAVIO PAZ,** *Mexican poet and essayist, is one of the most outstanding writers in the Spanish language today. He has been Mexico's ambassador to India and has taught at several universities, including Cambridge (U.K.) where he was Simon Bolivar Professor of Latin American studies. He has published several volumes of poetry, including* Libertad bajo Palabra *("Liberty on Parole"). English translations of his essays include* Claude Lévi-Strauss: An Introduction *(1972) and* Alternating Current *(1973). The article published here is taken from his classic analysis of the Mexican mind,* The Labyrinth of Solitude, *published by Grove Press Inc., New York 1961.*

Meso-America has been described as a uniform historical area characterized by the constant presence of certain elements common to all its cultures: an agriculture based on maize, a ritual calendar, a ritual ball-game, human sacrifices, solar and vegetation myths, and so on. It is said that all of these elements originated in the south and were assimilated at various times by the immigrants from the north.

If this were true, Meso-American culture would be the result of various southern creations that were adopted, developed and systematized by nomadic groups.

But, apart from the particular originality of each culture, it is evident that all of them, because of decadence or debilitation, were on the point of being absorbed into the Aztec Empire, which was heir to the civilizations of the Central Plateau.

Those societies were impregnated with religion. The Aztec state was both military and theocratic. Therefore, political unification was preceded or completed by religious unification, or corresponded to it in one way or another.

Before the Conquest, each city worshipped gods who steadily became more alike: their names were different but the ceremonies honouring them were similar.

The agrarian deities—the gods of the earth, of vegetation and fertility, like Tláloc, and celestial warriors like Tezcatlipoca, Huitzilopochtli and Mixcóatl—belonged to a single cult.

The most outstanding characteristic of Aztec religion at the time of the Conquest was the incessant theological speculation that reformed, systematized and unified diverse beliefs, both its own and others.

The systematizations, adaptations and reforms undertaken by the priestly caste show that the process was one of superimposition, which was also characteristic of religious architecture. Just as an Aztec pyramid often covers an older structure, so this theological unification affected only the surface of the Aztec consciousness, leaving the original beliefs intact.

The situation prefigured the introduction of Catholicism, which is also a religion superimposed upon an original and still-living religious base. Everything was prepared for Spanish domination.

The conquest of Mexico would be inexplicable without these antecedents. The arrival of the Spaniards seemed a liberation to the people under Aztec rule. The various city-states allied themselves with the conquistadors or watched with indifference—if not with pleasure—the fall of each of their rivals, especially that of the most powerful, Tenochtitlán.

But the political genius of the Spanish conqueror Cortés, the superior techniques of the Spaniards, and the defection of vassals and allies, could not have brought about the ruin of the Aztec Empire if it had not suddenly felt a sense of weakness, a deep-rooted doubt that caused it to vacillate and surrender.

When the Aztec emperor Montezuma opened the gates of Tenochtitlán to the Spaniards and welcomed Cortés with gifts, the Aztecs lost the encounter. Their final struggle was a form of suicide, as we can gather from all the existing accounts of that grandiose and astounding event.

Why did Montezuma give up? Why was he so fascinated by the Spaniards that he experienced a vertigo which it is no exaggeration to call sacred—the lucid vertigo of the suicide on the brink of the abyss? The gods had abandoned him.

The great betrayal with which the history of Mexico begins was not committed by the Tlaxcalan Indians or by Montezuma and his group: it was committed by the gods. No other people has ever felt so completely helpless as the Aztec nation felt at the appearance of the omens, prophecies and warnings that announced its fall.

We are unlikely to understand the meaning of these signs and predictions for the Indians if we forget their cyclical conception of time. As with many other peoples and civilizations, time was not an empty, abstract measurement to the Aztecs, but rather something concrete, a force or substance or fluid perpetually being used up. Hence the necessity of rites and sacrifices to reinvigorate the year or the century.

**CONTINUED PAGE 24**

1

In Mexico, Spanish Catholicism and indigenous beliefs have become so inextricably mixed that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish pagan gods from Christian saints, pre-Columbian rites from Catholic ritual. Mexican representations of Christ (photo 4) resemble certain Aztec gods as well as the suffering Christs of Spanish religious art. The same intermixture of Christian and pagan elements is found in religious festivals such as those of the Yaqui Indians of northwest Mexico, whose history can be traced back to pre-Columbian times. During Holy Week the Yaquis re-enact scenes from the Passion and perform rites harking back to their distant past. A curious feature of the ceremonies is the worship of Judas by masked Yaquis known as "Chapayecas" (the long-nosed ones). On this double page are shown scenes from Yaqui Holy Week: (1) Christ's litter, decked with flowers, is borne through the village; inside it are wooden fetishes and stuffed animals; (2) Long-nosed ritual masks of the Chapayecas, mounted on wooden swords; (3) Two Yaqui archers reverently guard the statue of Christ; (5) The "march of the warriors" outside the church recalls the Yaquis' long and sometimes fierce struggle to preserve their independence.

2

3

5

# The Passion according to the Yaquis

4

Photos © Marino Benzi-Editions du Chêne, Paris

But time—or, more precisely, each period of time—was not only something living that was born, grew up, decayed and was reborn. It was also a succession that returned: one period of time ended and another came back.

The arrival of the Spaniards was interpreted by Montezuma, at least at the beginning, not so much as a threat from outside than as the internal conclusion of one cosmic period and the commencement of another. The gods departed because their period of time was at an end, but another period returned and with it, other gods and another era.

The conquest of Mexico is an historical event made up of many very different circumstances, but what seems to me the most significant—the suicide of the Aztec people—is often forgotten.

One part of the Aztec people lost heart and sought out the invader. The other, betrayed on all sides and without hope of salvation, chose death. The mere presence of the Spaniards caused a split in Aztec society, a split corresponding to the dualism of their gods, their religious system and their higher castes.

Aztec religion, like that of all conquering people, was a solar religion. The Aztecs concentrated all their aspirations and warlike aims in the sun, the god who is the source of life, the bird-god who breaks through the mists and establishes himself in the centre of the sky like a conquering army in the centre of a battle-field.

But the gods were not mere representations of nature. They also embodied the will and desire of society, which made itself divine in them.

The victory of the death-wish shows that the Aztecs suddenly lost sight of their destiny. Cuauhtémoc, the last Aztec emperor, fought in the knowledge that he would be defeated. The tragic nature of his struggle lies in this bold and intimate acceptance of defeat.

The drama of a consciousness that sees everything around it destroyed—even the gods—appears to preside over Mexican history. Cuauhtémoc and his people died alone, abandoned by their friends, their allies, their vassals and their gods. They died as orphans.

The fall of Aztec society precipitated that of the rest of the Indian world. All the nations that composed it were overwhelmed by the same horror, which almost always expressed itself as a fascinated acceptance of death. Few documents are as impressive as the remaining handful that describe this catastrophe. Here is an expression of the suffering of the Mayas, as recorded in their holy book, *Chilam Balam de Chumayel:*

"II Akan Katun: the blond-bearded strangers arrived, the sons of the sun, the pale-coloured men. Ah, how sad we were when they arrived!... The white man's stick will fall, will descend from on high, will strike everywhere... The words of Hunab-Ku, our one god, will be words of sorrow when the words of the God of Heaven spread out over the earth... [And later:] The hangings will begin, and lightning will flash from the white man's hands... The hardships of battle will fall upon the Brothers, and tribute will be demanded after the grand entrance of Christianity, and the Seven Sacraments will be established, and travail and misery will rule this land."

The Mexican is a religious being and his experience of the divine is completely genuine. But who is his god? The ancient earth-gods or Christ?

In many instances Catholicism only covers over the ancient cosmogonic beliefs. In the following passage, Juan Pérez Jolote, a Chamula Indian of southern Mexico, describes the image of Christ in a church in his village and explains what it means to him and his people:

"This is Señor San Manuel here in this

**'The hero's tomb is the cradle of the people'**

coffin; he is also called Señor San Salvador or Señor San Mateo. He watches over the people and the animals. We pray to him to watch over us at home, on the road, in the fields. This other figure on the cross is also Señor San Mateo; he is showing us how he died on the cross, to teach us respect... Before San Manuel was born, the sun was as cold as the moon, and the *pukujes,* who ate people, lived on the earth. The sun began to grow warm after the birth of the Child-God, Señor San Salvador, who is the son of the Virgin."

In this account (recorded in *Juan Pérez Jolote, the Autobiography of a Chamula,* as told to the anthropologist Ricardo Pozas) we can see both the superimposed religion and the ineradicable presence of the indigenous myths. Before the birth of Christ, the sun—the eye of God—did not give warmth. The sun is an attribute of divinity.

The persistence of the pre-Cortesian myth underlies the difference between the Christian and indigenous conceptions. Christ saved the world because He redeemed the Mexicans and washed away the stain of Original Sin, but the Aztec god Quetzalcóatl was not so much a redeemer as a re-creator.

Among the Indians the idea of sin is still bound to the idea of health and sickness, personal, social and cosmic. The Christian attempts to save the individual soul, disconnected from the group and the body. Christianity condemns the world, while the Indian conceives of personal salvation only as a part of the salvation of society and the cosmos.

In modern Mexico, there is no especial veneration for God the Father in the Trinity. He is a dim figure at best. On the other hand, there is profound devotion to Christ as the Son of God, as the youthful God, above all as the victimized Redeemer.

The village churches have a great many images of Jesus—on the cross, or covered with thorns and wounds—in which the insolent realism of the Spaniards is mingled with the tragic symbolism of the Indians. On the one hand, the wounds are flowers, pledges of resurrection; on the other, they are a reiteration that life is the sorrowful mask of death.

The fervour of the cult of God the Son would seem to be explained, at first glance, as an inheritance from the pre-Hispanic religions.

When the Spaniards arrived, almost all of the great masculine divinities—with the exception of Tláloc, a child and an old man at the same time, and a deity of greater antiquity—were sons of gods like Xipe, god of the young corn, and Huitzilopochtli, the "Warrior of the South".

Perhaps it is not idle to recall that the birth of Huitzilopochtli offers more than one analogy with that of Christ: he too was conceived without carnal contact; the divine messenger was likewise a bird (it dropped a feather into the lap of the earth-goddess Coatlicue); and finally, the infant Huitzilopochtli also had to escape the persecution of a mythical Herod.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to use these analogies to explain the Mexican's devotion to Christ, just as it would be to attribute that devotion to a mere survival of the cult of the sons of gods.

The Mexican venerates a bleeding and humiliated Christ, a Christ who has been beaten by the soldiers and condemned by the judges, because he sees in him a transfigured image of his own identity. And this brings to mind Cuauhtémoc, the young Aztec emperor who was dethroned, tortured and murdered by Cortés.

Cuauhtémoc means "Falling Eagle". The Mexican chieftain rose to power at the beginning of the siege of México-Tenochtitlán, when the Aztecs had been abandoned by their gods, their vassals and their allies.

Even his relationship with a woman fits the archetype of the young hero, at one and the same time the lover and the son of the goddess. Thus López Velarde wrote that Cuauhtémoc went out to meet Cortés —that is, to the final sacrifice—"separated from the curved breast of the Empress".

He is a warrior but he is also a child. The exception is that the heroic cycle does not end with his death: the fallen hero awaits resurrection. It is not surprising that for the majority of Mexicans Cuauhtémoc should be the "young grandfather", the origin of Mexico: the hero's tomb is the cradle of the people. This is the dialectic of myth, and Cuauhtémoc is more a myth than an historical figure.

Photo © Gisèle Freund, Paris

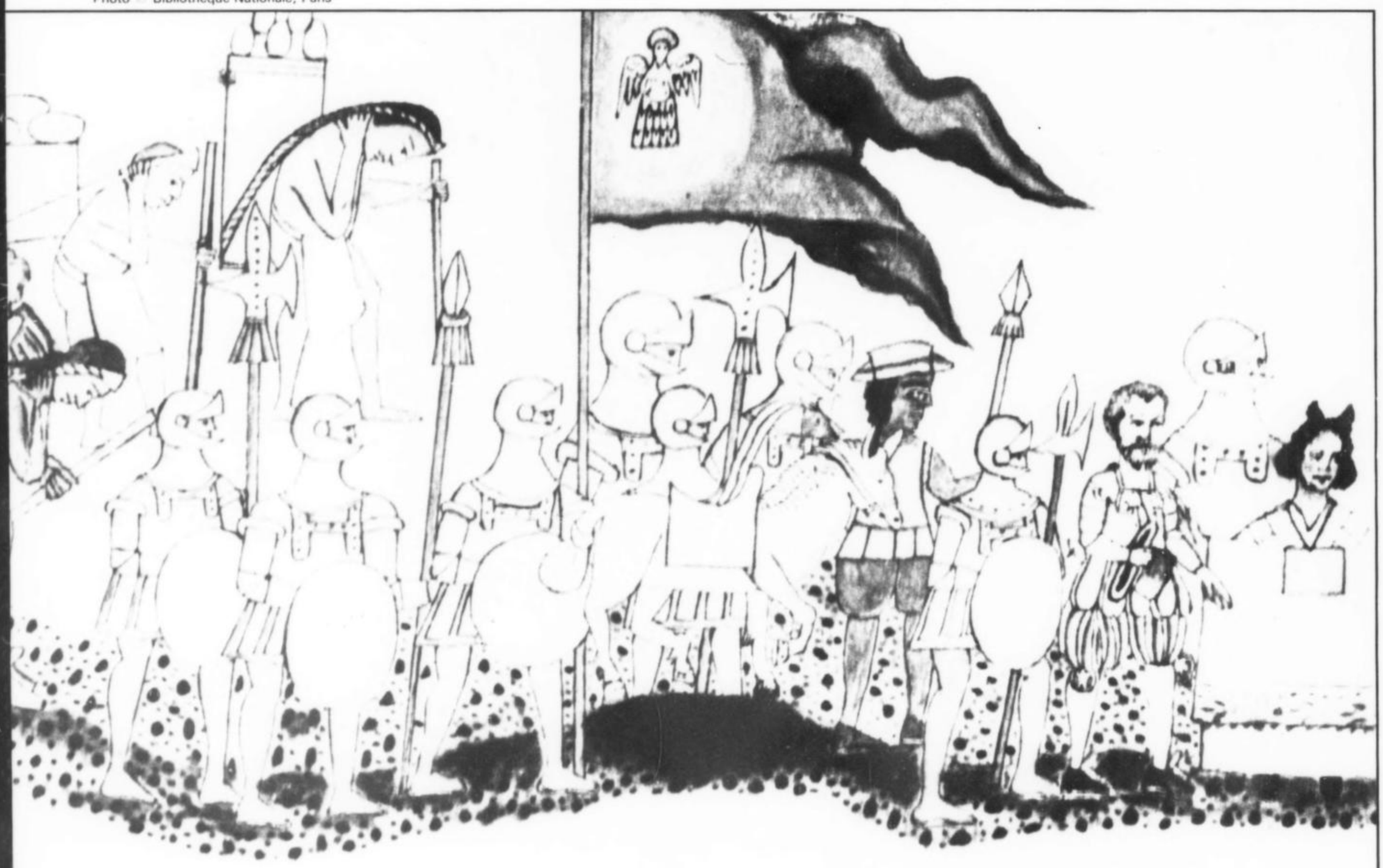
# The steps of time

**Imposing pyramid at Teotihuacán, north of Mexico City, was until recently covered by a mass of rubble, earth and vegetation. A major religious centre of ancient Mexico, Teotihuacán went into decline long before the conquistadors arrived.**

# Doña Malinche...

**Doña Malinche (or Doña Marina), the Indian woman who became the mistress of the Spanish general Cortés, is often taken as a symbol of Mexico's violation by the conquistadors. In the drawing below, from the *Codex Azcatitlán,* a manuscript dating from the beginning of the Spanish conquest, she can be seen (far right) beside Cortés, escorted by a group of Spanish soldiers and Indian porters.**

Photo © Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



Another element enters here, an analogy that makes this history a true poem in search of fulfilment: the location of Cuauhtémoc's tomb is not known. The mystery of his burial place is one of our obsessions as Mexicans. To discover it would mean nothing less than to return to our origins, to reunite ourselves with our ancestry, to break out of our solitude. It would be a resurrection.

If we ask about the third figure of the triad, the Mother, we hear a double answer. It is no secret to anyone that Mexican Catholicism is centred on the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe. In the first place, she is an Indian Virgin; in the second place, the scene of her appearance to the Indian Juan Diego was a hill that formerly contained a sanctuary dedicated to Tonantzin, "Our Mother", the Aztec goddess of fertility.

We know that the Conquest coincided with the apogee of the cult of two masculine divinities: Quetzalcóatl, the self-sacrificing god, and Huitzilopochtli, the young warrior-god. The defeat of these gods—which is what the Conquest meant to the Indian world, because it was the end of a cosmic cycle and the inauguration of a new divine kingdom—caused the faithful to return to the ancient feminine deities.

This phenomenon of a return to the maternal womb, so well known to the psychologist, is without doubt one of the determining causes of the swift popularity of the cult of the Virgin. The Indian goddesses were goddesses of fecundity, linked to the cosmic rhythms, the vegetative processes and agrarian rites. The Catholic Virgin is also the Mother (some Indian pilgrims still call her Guadalupe-Tonantzin), but her principal attribute is not to watch over the fertility of the earth but to provide refuge for the unfortunate.

The situation has changed: the worshippers do not try to make sure of their harvests but to find a mother's lap. The Virgin is the consolation of the poor, the shield of the weak, the help of the oppressed. In sum, she is the Mother of orphans. All men are born disinherited and their true condition is orphanhood, but this is particularly true of the Indians and the poor in Mexico.

The image of the *Chingada,* the violated mother, may be used to evoke the Spanish conquest, which was also a violation, not only in the historical sense but also in the very flesh of Indian women.

The symbol of this violation is Doña Malinche, the mistress of Cortés. It is true that she gave herself voluntarily to the conquistador, but he forgot her as soon as her usefulness was over. Doña Marina, as she was called by the Spaniards, came to represent the Indian women who were fascinated, violated or seduced by the Spaniards. And as a small boy will not forgive his mother if she abandons him to search for his father, the Mexican people have not forgiven "La Malinche" for her betrayal. She embodies the open, the *chingado,* to our closed, stoic, impassive Indians.

Cuauhtémoc and Doña Marina are thus two antagonistic and complementary figures. There is nothing surprising about our cult of the young emperor, an image of

# ...and Our Lady of Guadalupe

**The cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe, practised throughout Mexico, incorporates survivals from pre-Hispanic times. The Virgin appeared to an Indian, Juan Diego, on a hill near Mexico City where the Aztec fertility goddess Tonantzin was once worshipped, and some Indians still refer to her as "Guadalupe-Tonantzin". Below, Mexican Indians pray at a portable shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe.**

Photo © Marino Benzi-Editions du Chêne, Paris

the sacrificed son—and there is also nothing surprising about the curse that weighs on La Malinche. This explains the success of the contemptuous adjective *malinchista* to denounce all those who have been corrupted by foreign influences.

When we shout *"Viva México, hijos de la chingada!"* (Long live Mexico, children of the *chingada!),* we express our desire to live closed off from the outside world and above all from the past. In this shout, we condemn our origins and deny our hybridism. The strange permanence of Cortés and La Malinche in the Mexican's imagination and sensibilities reveals that they are something more than historical figures: they are symbols of a secret conflict that we have still not resolved.

When he repudiates La Malinche—the Mexican Eve—the Mexican breaks his ties with the past, renounces his origins, and lives in isolation and solitude.

The Mexican condemns all his traditions at once, the whole set of gestures, attitudes and tendencies in which it is now difficult to distinguish the Spanish from the Indian. For that reason the Hispanic thesis, which would have us descend from Cortés to the exclusion of La Malinche, is the patrimony of a few extremists.

The same can be said of indigenist propaganda, which is also supported by fanatical creoles and mestizos, while the Indians have never paid it the slightest attention. The Mexican does not want to be either an Indian or a Spaniard. Nor does he want to be descended from them. He denies them. And he does not affirm himself as a mixture, but rather as an abstraction: he is a man. He becomes the son of Nothingness. His beginnings are in his own self.

The opposition between life and death was not so absolute to the ancient Mexicans as it is to us. Life extended into death, and vice versa. Death was not the natural end of life but one phase of an infinite cycle. Life, death and resurrection were stages of a cosmic process which repeated itself continuously.

Life had no higher function than to flow into death, its opposite and complement; and death, in turn, was not an end in itself: man fed the insatiable hunger of life with his death. Sacrifices had a double purpose: on the one hand man participated in the creative process, at the same time paying back to the gods the debt contracted by his species; on the other hand he nourished cosmic life and also social life, which was nurtured by the former.

Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of this conception is the impersonal nature of the sacrifice. Since their lives did not belong to them, their deaths lacked any personal meaning.

Our indigenous ancestors did not believe that their deaths belonged to them, just as they never thought that their lives were really theirs in the Christian sense. Everything was examined to determine, from birth, the life and death of each man: his social class, the year, the place, the day, the hour. The Aztec was as little responsible for his actions as for his death.

Space and time were bound together and formed an inseparable whole. There was a particular "time" for each place, each of the cardinal points and the centre in which they were immobilized. Whereas we dissociate space and time, mere stage sets for the actions of our lives, there were as many "space-times" for the Aztecs as there were combinations in the priestly calendar, each one endowed with a particular qualitative significance, superior to human will.

Religion and destiny ruled their lives, as morality and freedom rule ours. We live under the sign of liberty, and everything —even Greek fatality and the grace of the theologians—involves choosing and struggle, but for the Aztecs the problem reduced itself to investigating the never-clear will of the gods.

The advent of Catholicism radically modified this situation. Sacrifice and the idea of salvation, formerly collective, became personal. Freedom was humanized, embodied in man. To the ancient Aztecs the essential thing was to assure the continuity of creation; sacrifice did not bring about salvation in another world, but cosmic health; the universe, and not the individual, was given life by the blood and death of human beings. For Christians it is the individual who counts.

Both attitudes, opposed as they may seem, have a common note: life, collective or individual, looks forward to a death that in its way is a new life. Life only justifies and transcends itself when it is realized in death, and death is also a transcendence, in that it is a new life.

To Christians death is a transition, a somersault between two lives, the temporal and the otherworldly; to the Aztecs it was the profoundest way of participating in the continuous regeneration of the creative forces, which were always in danger of being extinguished if they were not provided with blood, the sacred food. In both systems life and death lack autonomy; they are the two sides of a single reality.

■ **Octavio Paz**

# Fiesta of death

Mexicans, perhaps more than any other people, regard death as a close acquaintance to be mocked, serenaded and treated with broad humour and slapstick burlesque. Shown here are some expressions of this attitude, which may seem macabre to other peoples but comes quite naturally to the Mexican. (2) Grinning figures of death in the carnival at Tlaxcala; (1 and 4) two skeleton bands; (3) A skull made of sugar, traditionally eaten on All Saints' Day. Inscribed on the forehead is the name of the person who gives or receives it. (5) Death is a major theme in the work of the great Mexican artist José Guadalupe Posada (1851-1913). In this engraving, a grinning skeletal Don Quixote mounted on a skeletal steed routs the skeletons of his enemies.

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Photo © Almasy, Paris

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Photo © Musée de l'Homme, Paris

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Photo © Marino Benzi-Editions du Chêne, Paris

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Photo © Almasy, Paris

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# OUT OF THE TROPICS, AN AVANT-GARDE ART

***by Arturo Uslar-Pietri***

OVER the past 20 years, in a surprising and significant departure, a group of Latin Americans has taken the lead in one of the most novel developments in contemporary art: kinetic art (See *Unesco Courier,* September 1963).

In going beyond abstraction and in formulating what must be regarded as a new plastic language rich in possibilities, these artists have contributed to the creation and definition of a new dimension in art.

Kinetic artists have discovered the elements of a new language and a new relationship. They believe that works of art, instead of simulating space and movement, should create their own movement and a new spatial relationship with the people looking at them. Instead of contemplating a work of art from the outside, people participate in it. In some instances, they can actually install themselves physically inside it, like being in a forest or in a rainstorm.

The fact that artists from Latin America have become some of the leading creators of the new kinetic language in the world's

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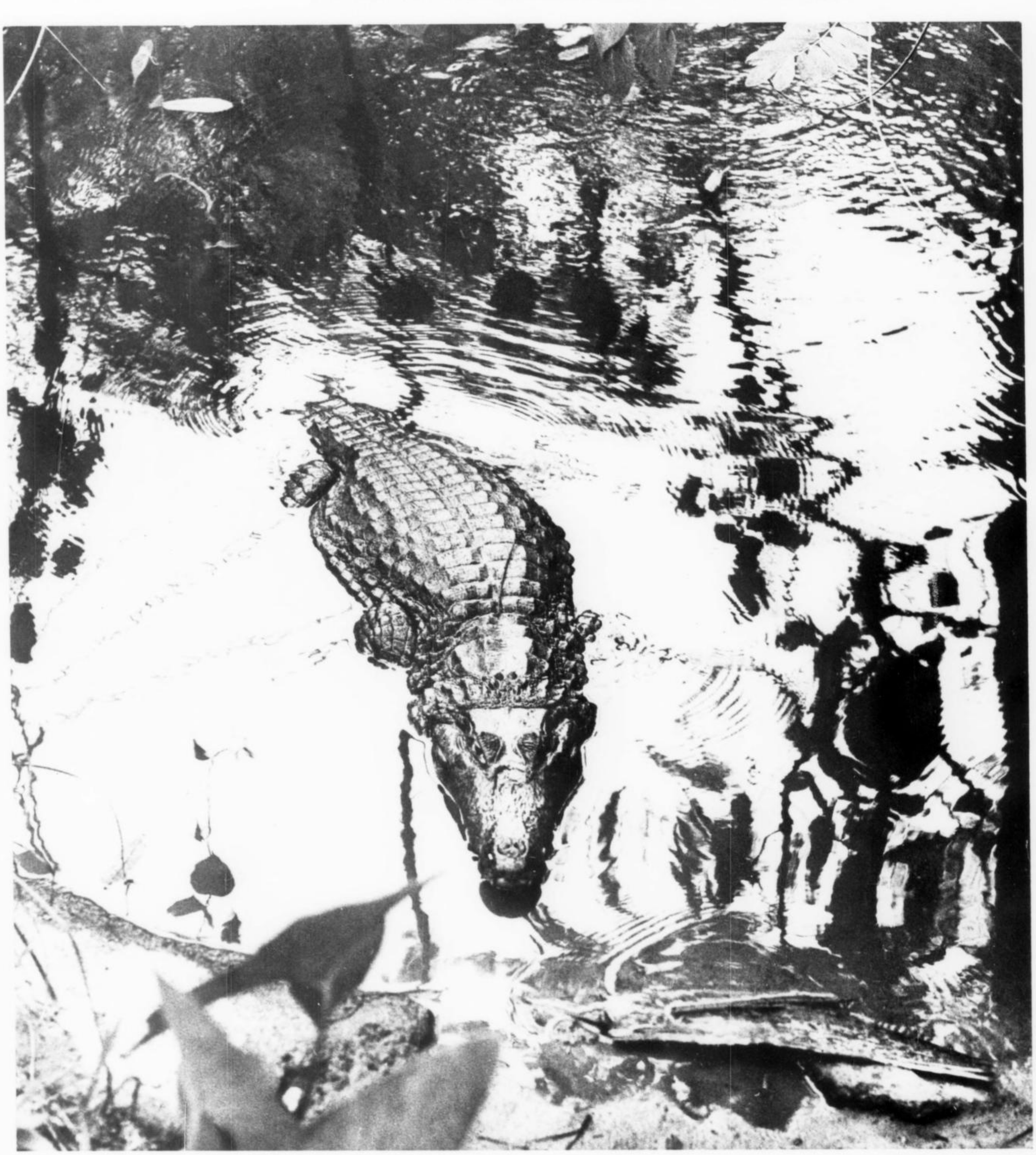
**ARTURO USLAR-PIETRI,** *Venezuela's ambassador and permanent delegate to Unesco and member of the Organization's Executive Board, is one of Latin America's most famous writers. He is the author of many novels, short stories and essays such as* La Otra América *("The Other America") and has been professor of Latin American literature at Columbia University (U.S.A.). His novel* Las Lanzas Coloradas *has been published in English as* The Red Lances *(Knopf, New York, 1962).*

Much of Latin America is situated in the tropics. The vast impenetrable forests, rugged high plateaux, mighty rivers and endless beaches of the tropical landscape constitute a hostile, menacing presence whose multifarious forms and colours are constantly changing. This landscape has inspired a major development in modern art, kinetic art, in which three Venezuelan artists, Jesús Soto, Carlos Cruz Diez and Alejandro Otero play a leading role. For the close link between their work and natural life in the tropics (below) see also page 33 and centre colour pages.



Photos © Michael Freeman, London

art centres has caused surprise and given rise to controversy.

There are some who claim in rather simplistic fashion that this type of art is not suited to the development of Latin America and its social and historical background. Latin American artists, they feel, should confine themselves to popular realism or political expressionism instead of forging ahead in search of new forms and types of expression that are in the forefront of Western artistic creation.

However, the fact is that these artists have not broken with their past, nor have they gone against their own sensibility. Anybody who has been in contact with them or has heard them speak soon discovers that there are solid ties between what they are creating, what they themselves are and what, as Latin Americans, they are keeping alive.

I would go even further and suggest that it is the very fact that they are Latin Americans that has prompted them to strike out in search of new spatial forms and movement. Kinetic art is not merely an offshoot of machines and big cities: it reflects the changing relationship of man with his natural environment and with the movement in which he participates. This could largely explain why Latin American sensibility is suited to the creation of kinetic art.

Latin Americans have always had a special relationship with nature. They have never seen it as a mere backcloth, for nature has always conditioned their way of life. Most of Latin America is situated in the tropical or sub-tropical regions, where the landscape assumes proportions that are unknown in Europe.

Quite apart from the sheer mass of the inaccessible snow-capped cordilleras, the ocean-like expanses of the plains, the incredible vastness of the impenetrable forests and the majesty of the heaviest-flowing and most fickle rivers in the world, nature itself is particularly hostile and aggressive. Its vastness and magnitude are a threat to man. Vegetation proliferates and is all-devouring. From time to time, floods turn the plains into inland seas. In a matter of hours, one can move from dense, humid forests to bleak and barren uplands.

The people of Latin America have lived for centuries in open conflict with nature. Plants and animals have been their traditional invaders. The landscape is always on the move, lying in wait. To venture into the realm of nature is to court danger.

Moreover, in the tropics, nature is continually changing—even in the course of a single day. In the morning, it flares up with life, at midday it is obliterated by the dazzling whiteness of the sun and, as the evening draws in, it breaks down into an endless profusion of tints and hues before turning at night into a frenzied theatre of moving shadows and indistinct noises.

In Latin America, man's relationship with space has a dynamic and dangerous quality that is unfamiliar to Europeans. It is space which man has still scarcely managed to subjugate or penetrate.

**'Kinetic art reflects man's changing relationship with his environment'**

Man has not succeeded in creating a stable relationship with the shifting, trembling earth, the bursting torrents, the arid or inundated plains, the volcanoes belching fire into the sky, or the stealth of ravenous and hostile animals.

In the Latin American cultural melting pot, there is an all-pervasive impression that the white and the black, the two protagonists who came from outside the continent, are still somewhat ill at ease in their environment. Only the Indians have succeeded in establishing a harmonious and balanced relationship with nature in Latin America.

We have no record as to how the blacks reacted, but we have ample evidence of the fear and anxiety which gripped the Spaniards when they were confronted with nature in Latin America. A work such as that written by the Jesuit priest José de Acosta at the end of the 16th century echoes their apprehension at having to contend with the landscape and the plant and animal life. For Europeans, the Atlantic crossing alone represented a sudden break with centuries-old norms, distances and living patterns linking them with their natural environment.

This break in continuity and the appearance of a new set of dimensions were bound to affect the psychological make-up of these people and their attitude to life. Their whole frame of reference was suddenly transformed.

Concepts of altitude and distance changed, as did the significance of natural phenomena, and the impact this had on people's minds was far-reaching. It gave rise to a sort of instability psychosis and an agonizing break in man's day-to-day relations with his world. Everything was different, changing and unfamiliar. Rain was a torrential downpour unleashed from the sky and rivers were such vast expanses of water that the other side did not exist.

Fear of warlike Indians was only one thing: dread of the uncharted and menacing wilderness was another. We do not know—but it is easy for us to imagine—what enormous psychological pressures the conquistadors must have been subjected to when they felt that all the spatial relationships which had hitherto governed and secured their lives were collapsing.

We cannot know what the companions of Francisco d'Orellana must have felt when, like dwarfs in an infinite fastness, they sailed down the immense and unfathomable Amazon, or what Hernando de Soto and his handful of men sensed when they entered the Mississippi basin, which could have contained the plateau of Castile a hundred times over and the waters of the Guadalquivir as many times again. Or, for that matter, what Vasco Nunez de Balboa felt when he first glimpsed the Pacific; or what the straggling bands of adventurers thought as the days went by and they saw no end to the oceans of grass of the Orinoco and La Plata plains; or the feeling of awe which gripped Pizarros's comrades in arms when they first set eyes on the wall of rock and snow formed by the Andes.

Perhaps a good many of the psychotic and criminal reactions engendered by the conquest of Latin America stemmed from the fact that man had taken so enormous a step and had broken his normal, traditional relations with space.

This state of mind has survived in various forms among the descendants of the Spanish conquerors and the black peoples; they are heirs to a disorder that has never been completely overcome. For thousands of years, Europeans, Africans and Asians have adapted to the dimensions and characteristics of their environment and have assimilated them. But the culture, language, historical vision and sense of landscape which have prevailed in Latin America are those of the European transplant.

**'Nature has played a decisive role in man's adventure on this continent'**

Cultural intermingling has not solved the problem; in fact, it has kept some of the contradictions alive. The image which present-day Latin Americans have of volcanoes, rivers, alligators, snakes, and so on, is not that of the Indians. It is closer to that of the Europeans who experienced the initial shock of transplantation. They still find nature threatening and strange. They apprehend it as an immeasurably large being which is gravitating around them and fighting them, and with which they cannot live on confident and stable terms.

Nature has been a dominant theme in Latin American literature right up to the present day because it was not only an impressive new experience but also played a decisive role in man's adventure on the continent.

To my mind, this has also been a decisive factor in the part which Latin American artists have played in the development of kinetic art.

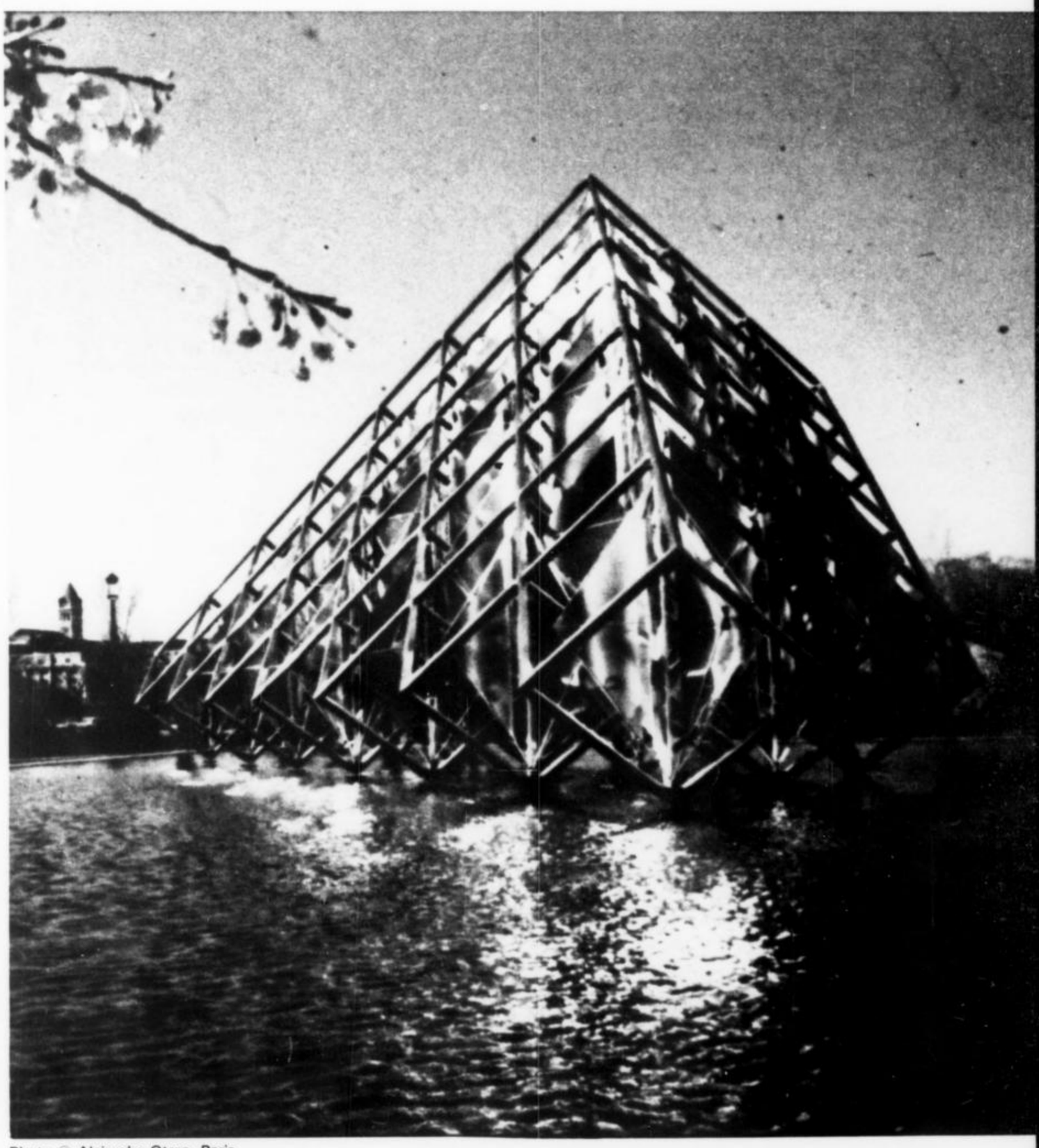


Photo © Alejandro Otero, Paris

**The Venezuelan artist Alejandro Otero has created giant metal structures with mobile sections, which are remarkable examples of the integration of works of art into the landscape. Pablo Neruda, the great Chilean poet and Nobel Prize-winner, once wrote of these outdoor structures: "Now they are shimmering lights, now playing water. They are vibrant structures, whose loftiness is both material and spiritual." Below, one of a group of three works entitled *Delta Solar* created by Otero in Washington D.C.**

Of many possible examples, I shall discuss three leading Venezuelan artists I know well, who came to Paris in the early 1950s at a time when abstract painting seemed to have exhausted its possibilities and who produced work whose originality was instrumental in charting new directions in art.

Jesus Soto came from the most tropical and forested region of Venezuela. He was brought up in Ciudad Bolivar on the Orinoco on the edge of the Guyana forest, in a geographical setting in which, perhaps unlike any other, human beings were puny compared with the subjugating and manifold presence of a natural environment that was imbued with strength, dynamism and myriad forms. Ciudad Bolivar was not a centre for training in the arts but a long-established settlement on the banks of a vast river and at the edge of an impenetrable tropical forest. The most striking presence that Soto witnessed until he was in his teens was that of the forest.

After studying at the School of Plastic Arts in Caracas and spending some time teaching in an art school in Maracaibo, Soto came to Paris filled with youthful enthusiasm. He arrived in postwar Paris, where total anarchy reigned as all kinds of abstract art were being taught. Soto was captivated by all the possibilities which lay before him and, after a short breathing-space, he ventured boldly along a new road: the art of movement and spectator participation.

With amazing speed, he became an innovator. He sensed that it was possible to create a new space in which the work of art and the spectator were merged and in which movement would not be simulated or mechanically generated but would be created by the spontaneous and deliberate participation of the spectator.

He was to claim later that his aim was to "integrate time into art", in other words, to go much further than Mondrian, Kandinsky and Malevich.

He began by assembling piles of superimposed translucent or opaque elements in varying patterns, which interacted with one another as the spectator's eyes moved across them. He created new visions and optical illusions which, through their action on the eye, set up endless vibrations of lines and colours to give an impression of fluid and living space endowed with a fourth dimension.

These new spaces created by Soto, where the spectator enters into, and forms part of, a new relationship involving movement and variations in colour, line and perspective, are strongly reminiscent of some of the features of his native tropical landscape. The movement of vertical rods superimposed in differing thicknesses, and the colours and forms which appear to move and change, produce an effect very similar to that of the palm fronds, creepers and ferns in the dense tropical forest, where the interplay of light and distance seems to subject them to perpetual variation.

Between Soto's works and certain aspects of nature in the tropics there is a correlation whose existence has, in fact, been demonstrated in a film.

Soto did not make a conscious and deliberate effort to produce this effect; it simply emerged during his search for a new art form because of the way in which his responses had been conditioned.

In his constant endeavour to encourage the participation of spectators and actually integrate them into works of art, he has succeeded in creating new forms which offer the most extraordinary possibilities. In his "ambiguous spaces", for instance, he uses large plexiglass compartments in which the transparent surfaces and visitors' movements create an effect of continuously vibrating shapes, colours and perspectives.

One of his most recent experiments along these lines are the "penetrables", dense hanging columns of nylon rope which visitors enter, in which they lose their bearings and are swallowed up, as if in dense jungle or a tropical cloudburst. The visual sensation is enhanced by the experience of being in physical contact with a tentacular and amorphous material which covers and envelops the participant like the spray from a waterfall.

Soto has also created "audio-penetrables" made of resonating metal rods. As the spectator passes by, these rods set up a continuous metallic vibrating sound which adds to the vibrations of light and

CONTINUED PAGE 66

## COLOUR PAGES

**Opposite page:**

**Indians dress up as their Aztec forebears in a scene from the Dance of the Conquest in Mexico City (above). In this dance retracing the events of the Spanish invasion, the performers give free rein to their taste for rich ornamentation and brilliant colours, a distinctive feature of Mexican popular art. In Brazil, many of today's popular dances such as the *macumba* (below) are of African origin.**

Photo © Gisèle Freund, Paris
Photo Klaus Meyer © Rapho, Paris

**Centre double page:**

**Impact of nature on art is strikingly evident in these photos of a South American forest scene (above right) and of two contemporary works of art. At left, a sculpture of metallic rods by the Venezuelan Jesús Soto. (A similar work by Soto stands in the entrance of a building at Unesco's headquarters in Paris.) Below, a chromatic structure by his compatriot Carlos Cruz Díez. Born in the tropics, both artists succeed in transposing the impression of a dense tropical jungle in their works.**

Photo © Jesús Soto, Paris
Photo Klaus Meyer © Rapho, Paris
Photo © Cruz Diez, Paris

Photo Hans Silvester © Rapho, Paris

**Above, four strolling players in the Andes, where musical instruments of local origin like the Indian flute are still played alongside those imported by the Spanish settlers.**

# THE LIVING LEGACY OF THE ANDES

*by Pablo Macera*

Photos Hans Silvester — Rapho, Paris

**The conquistadors transformed Cuzco, ancient capital of the Inca empire, into a Spanish city. Almost all the buildings in the centre of modern Cuzco rest on Inca foundations. Opposite page, entrance of the Inca Temple of the Moon at Ollantay Tambo near Cuzco. Andalusian influence is strongly marked in the narrow Cuzco street above.**

THREE South American countries, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, constitute the heartland of the ancient civilization of the Andes. Other countries like Colombia and Chile also played some part in this civilization, whose influence can be felt even in the extreme north of the Republic of Argentina.

Over an area of almost 3 million square kilometres, millions of people thus live—often without realizing it—according to norms of conduct that evolved thousands of years ago.

In speaking of "the civilization of the Andes," we are not merely referring to the famous Inca emperors of Cuzco. The Incas were to Andean civilization what the Romans were to classical Mediterranean civilization or the Persians to Mesopotamia: an end rather than a beginning.

A simple date demonstrates this fact. The Incas began their conquests in the middle of the 15th century and their empire was only 80 years old when it was destroyed by the Spanish invaders. Andean civilization, on the other hand, had begun to take shape thousands of years before. The most ancient inhabitants of what is today Peru and Ecuador lived 20,000 years ago alongside the giant sloth and the sabre-toothed tiger.

Around 2000 or 3000 B.C., the population began to domesticate numerous plants (Lima beans, kidney beans, cotton, potatoes and maize) and such animals as the llama, the guinea pig and the duck. The invention of pottery, which also dates from this period, allowed them to make more efficient use of fire and water.

Some 3,000 to 4,000 years elapsed between the formation of the first agrarian societies in the Andes and the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. Empires rose and fell during this time, and many highly complex and sophisticated cultures were implanted in various parts of the vast

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# Threading through the centuries

Andean region. Three of these cultures—Chavín, Tihuanaco and Inca (dating from 1000 B.C., 800 A.D. and 1400 A.D. respectively)—still constitute a unifying link between Peruvians, Ecuadorians and Bolivians. We can say that geographically Chavín was an "Ecuadorian" culture, Tihuanaco a "Bolivian culture" and that of the Incas was a "Peruvian" one, although this is an approximation since Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador are very recent creations, barely 150 years old.

How much of these ancient Andean civilizations disappeared when the Europeans arrived? How much still survives? Even in the Andean countries, no-one knows for certain, and the question arouses vigorous controversy in which scientific considerations take second place to political passions.

Those who hold conservative political views claim that they belong to a Western, Christian society. For them, Andean culture is only of marginal importance within the framework created by European colonialism. Moderates say that theirs is a mixed society—a mestizo culture—whereby they try to mask the conflicts that exist between Andean and European culture

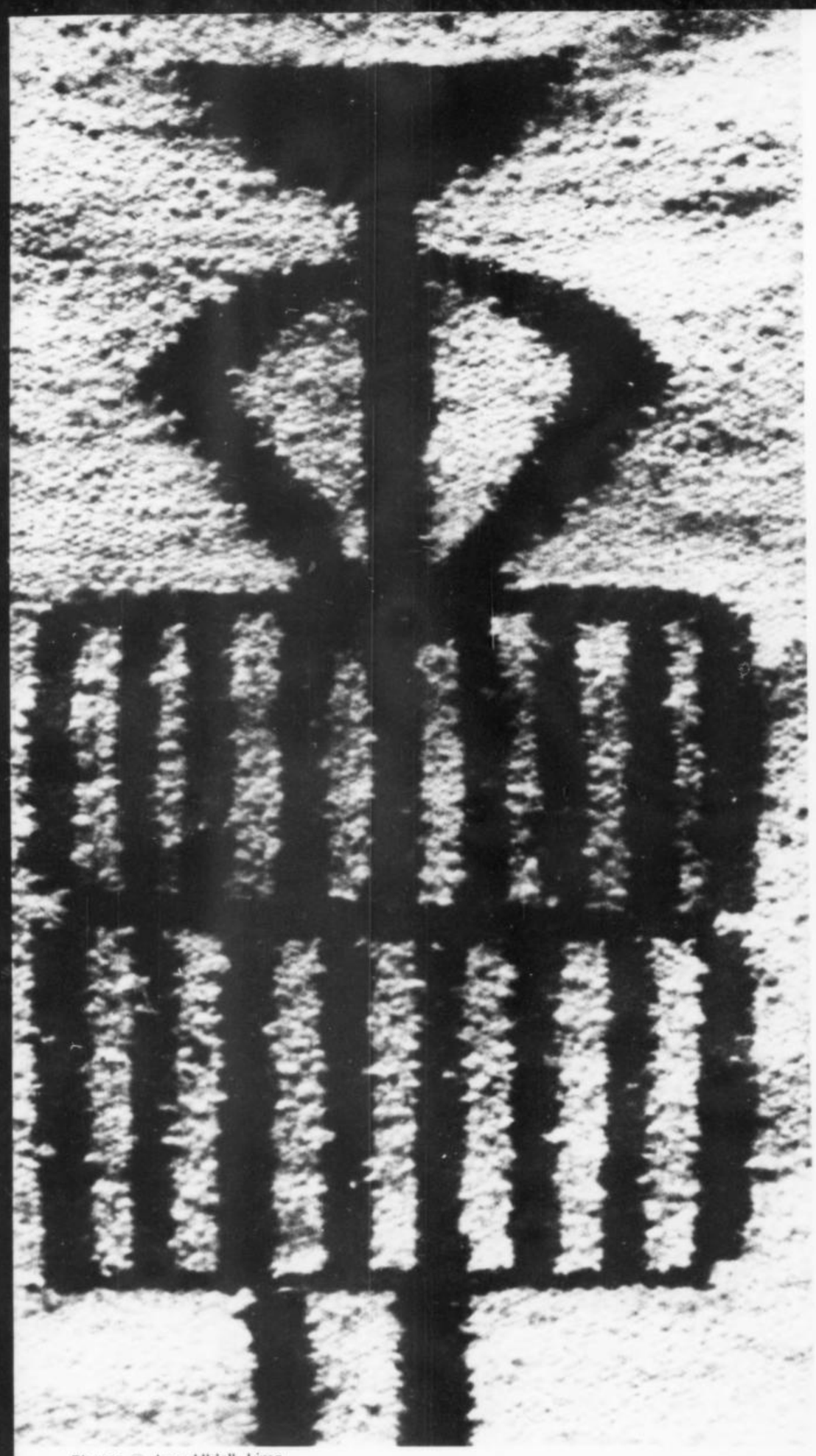
The truth is quite different. A provincial, Western-type culture does of course exist in these South American countries, but it is found primarily in certain urban areas, where its future is in question.

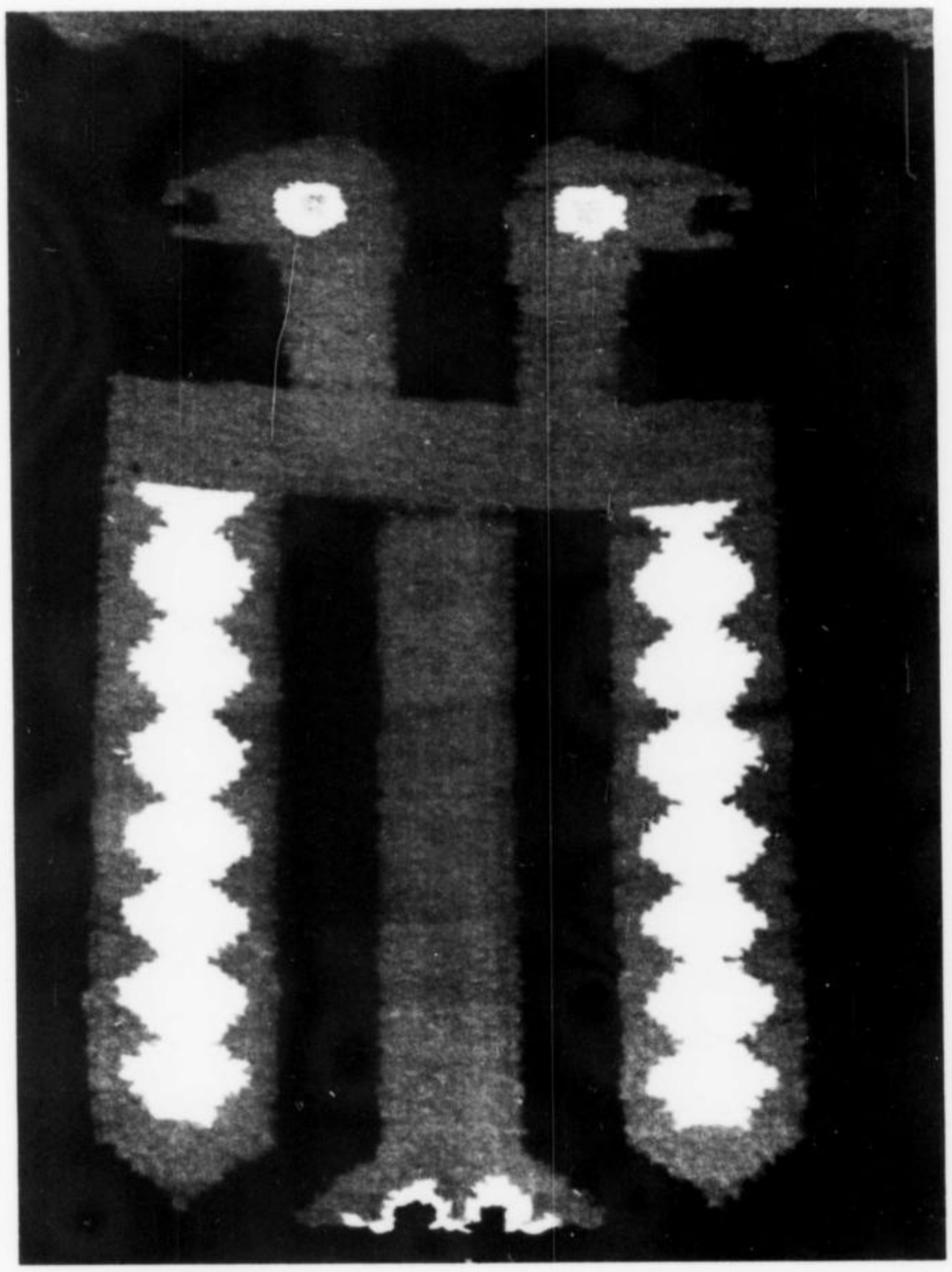
The mestizos, members of a group which is difficult to define from a scientific standpoint, have never since colonial times managed to emerge as an entity independent of Andean or European culture.

But for most of the population, Andean culture is still the only frame of reference. This is true not only of the Amerindians belonging to different ethnic and linguistic groups (Quechuas, Aymaras, Urochipayas and Yas) but of all the other inhabitants of Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.

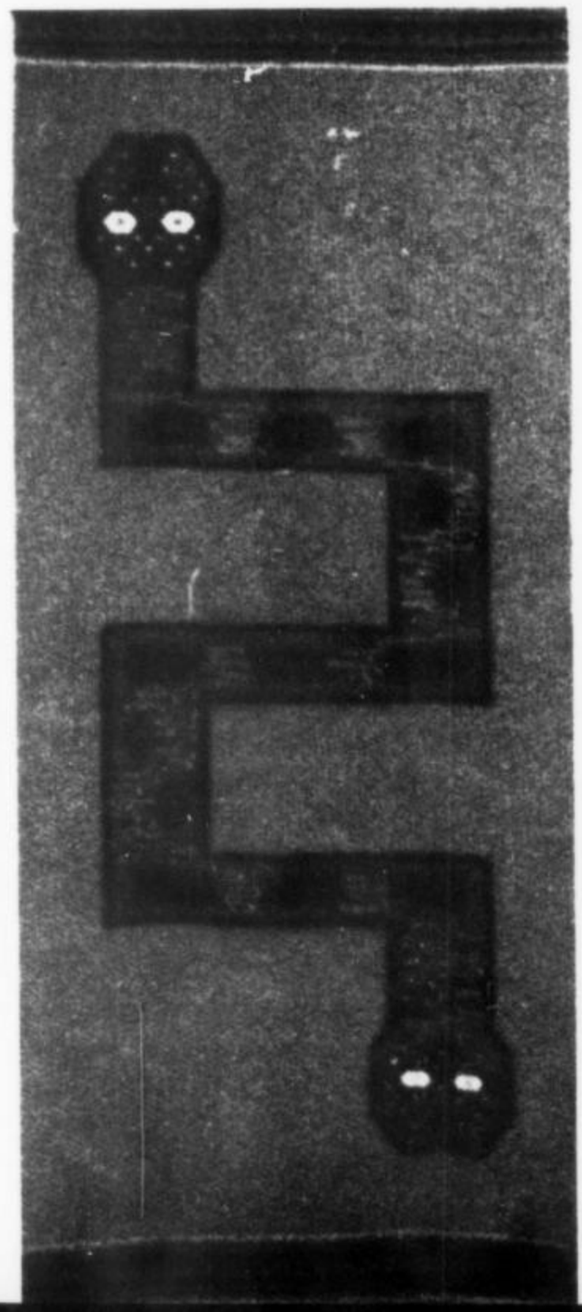
At least 90 per cent of the place names in these countries come from the Andean languages. But more important, Andean and not European culture shapes economic and social structures in the rural areas of Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, and this is where the overwhelming majority of the people live. South American farmers were of course subject to the feudal system of the *hacienda,* or ranch, and the Spa-

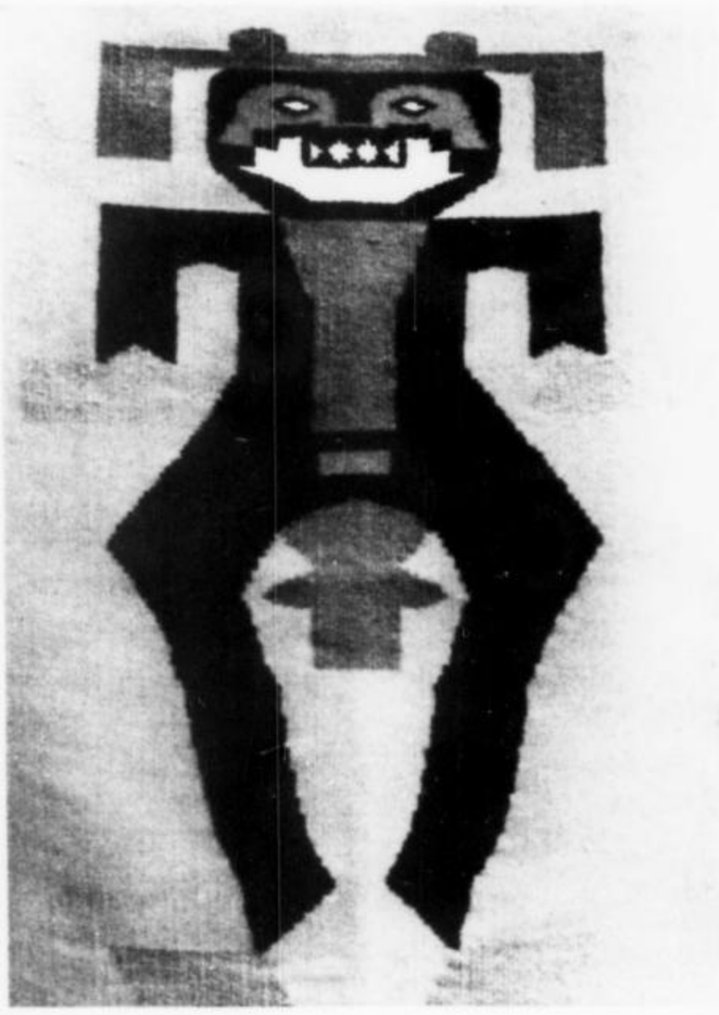
**An ancient civilization flourished in the Andes many centuries before the arrival of the Spanish invaders. From its heartland in what is now Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, its influence stretched as far as northwest Argentina. In the rural areas of the Andes today, a popular tradition survives of hand-woven objects whose patterns and vivid colours recall those of the Incas. The works shown here display animal motifs—a serpent, a two-headed condor or eagle—as well as stylized representations of the human form and geometric designs.**





Photos © Joan Uldall, Lima





niards tried to introduce new crops and farming techniques. But 400 years later, the Amerindian ways still prevail.

The ancient crops—such as the potato, maize, and yucca—still form the basis of their diet, and the people of the Andes practise many of the neolithic farming techniques used by their ancestors before the Spanish Conquest. Oxen, ploughs, wheels and metals are practically unknown; farmers still use wood and stone tools, without the help of animals.

But Andean civilization has not only survived at the economic and technological level; it also shapes the people's ways of thinking and their most sophisticated art and religious forms. The peoples of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia do not perceive, organize or represent Space or Time like Westerners.

Europeans think of time in terms of progress and are sure that the future is bound to be better than the past. But in Andean civilization, time is cyclical, with an ascending and a descending phase leading to a great Universal Crisis *(Pachacutec)* which may bring about the end of the world.

This is a cosmic vision no doubt suited to ancient agrarian societies subject to seasonal cycles. It is also appropriate in an environment in which natural disasters—earthquakes, floods and droughts—are so frequent.

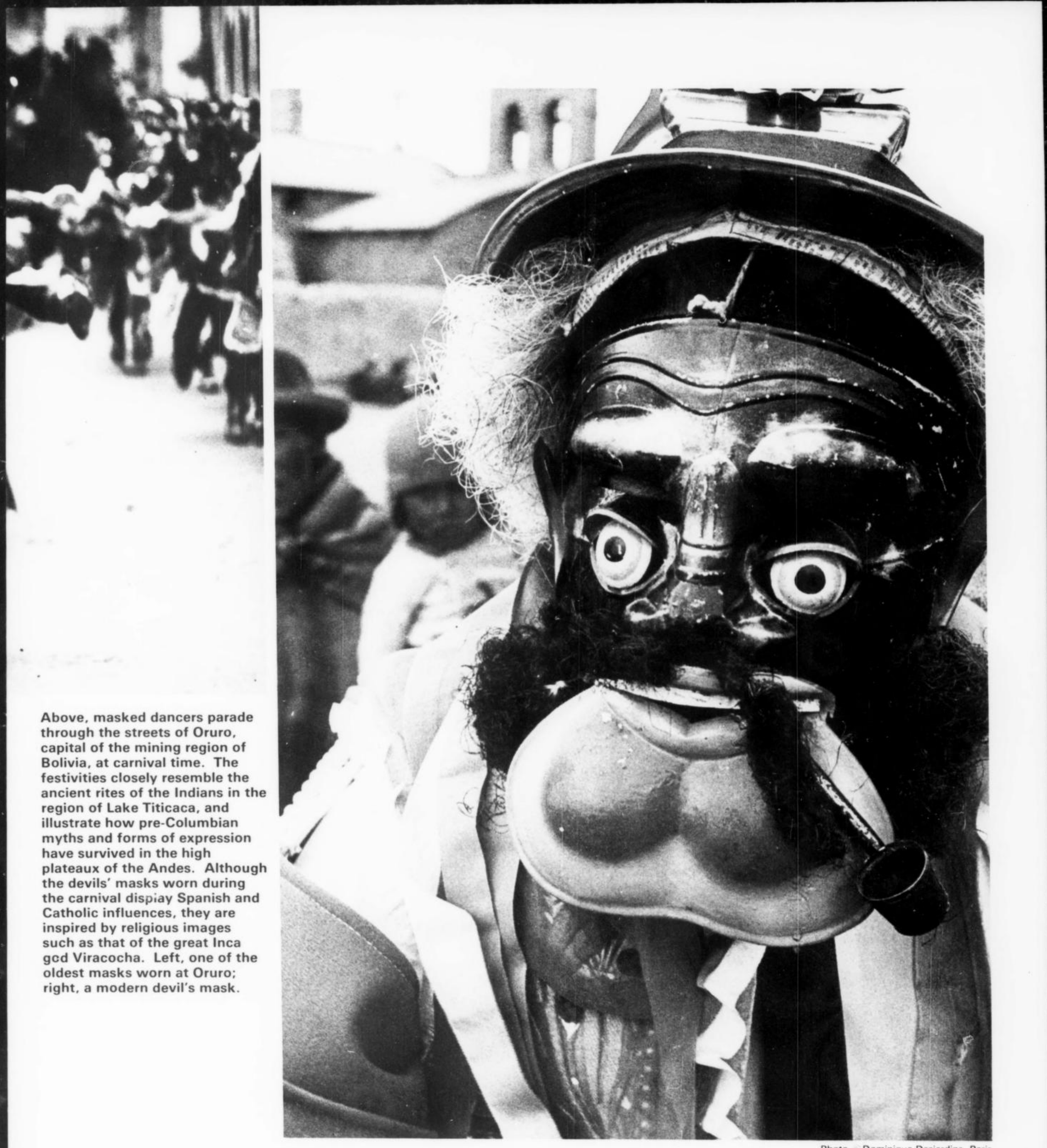
This notion of *Pachacutec* explains the importance of certain Catholic cults like that of the Lima Lord of Miracles, who is none other than an ancient god, Pachacamac, dressed up as a Christian. The same could be said of the "Taitacha Temblores" (earthquakes) of Cuzco.

Nevertheless, Andean culture does not express an attitude of pessimism and resignation. Instead, it embodies the idea that man's mission is to re-establish a cosmic balance through such concepts as *Tinkuy* and *Paikiki*. *Tinkuy* denotes the idea of struggle but also of union. *Paikiki* is the magic counterpart which compensates and counterbalances. The people of the Andes still think of their lives in terms of *Pachacutec* (crisis), *Tinkuy* (strife and union) and *Paikiki* (parity and equilibrium).

When they are confronted with desperate hardship and poverty which give the lie to the Western idea of progress, they do not lapse into pessimism. They know that their duty is to join with the positive forces in the universe to overcome

# The gods dance at Oruro

Photos © Eduardo Barrios-Unesco



Above, masked dancers parade through the streets of Oruro, capital of the mining region of Bolivia, at carnival time. The festivities closely resemble the ancient rites of the Indians in the region of Lake Titicaca, and illustrate how pre-Columbian myths and forms of expression have survived in the high plateaux of the Andes. Although the devils' masks worn during the carnival display Spanish and Catholic influences, they are inspired by religious images such as that of the great Inca god Viracocha. Left, one of the oldest masks worn at Oruro; right, a modern devil's mask.

Photo © Dominique Desjardins, Paris

*Pachacutec.* This cosmic vision is reflected in the way space is used and represented in poetic symbolism.

Like all agrarian societies of the oriental-despotic type, that could tap large manpower reserves, the Andean societies erected buildings that required enormous masses of material.

This practice survived into the Spanish colonial period because the Spaniards had the same abundance of workers as the Inca emperors and the Chavín priests.

Egyptian and Babylonian architecture also used enormous masses of material. All these edifices are designed according to a special order, or rule, which in the case of Andean civilization may be described as the horizontal principle. On the coasts and in the mountains, everything was built on the horizontal: human creations were parallel to the landscape, so that the buildings seem designed to express the hidden potential of natural shapes.

We find this principle throughout the region: in a temple of the pre-ceramic period on the coast; in sanctuaries of the Chavín and Tihuanaco cultures; and in the ranch houses of the colonial and republican periods. It has also survived in mid-20th century buildings such as the Lima Civic Centre, where a young Peruvian architect made bold use of concrete to create large masses which, far from clashing with the urban surroundings, actually reflect them.

But this use of parallel and horizontal lines is nowhere more evident than in Cuzco, where all is sad and grandiose. Nothing is more Andean than Cuzco cathedral, built nevertheless by a Spanish architect. The massive cathedral stretches along one side of the square like an immense parapet defending the Sacsahuaman fortress, unlike the Jesuit church of La Compañia which rises vertically towards the sky.

It is important to remember, however, that the economic and social foundations of Andean civilization were profoundly altered by the European invasion of the 16th century. The conquerors demanded recognition as conquerors, and to survive, the conquered peoples had to dissimulate.

Dissimulation is the second principle of Andean civilization under Spanish and creole domination. For the last 400 years Andean civilization has worn camouflage.

In Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, "yes" can mean either "yes", or "no" but one can never be sure unless one is an initiate. Language not only enshrines the legitimate and necessary hypocrisy of the underdog, but it is also a tactical device for preserving what is one's own and triumphing over a dominant culture by taking over one of its power bases.

It also presupposes a generalized use of metaphor. Whites and creoles in South America today contemptuously describe the Indians as liars because they cannot understand that metaphors have become an underpinning of Andean culture—a structure reinforced by the colonial situation. Let us examine some results of this process in the vast area stretching from

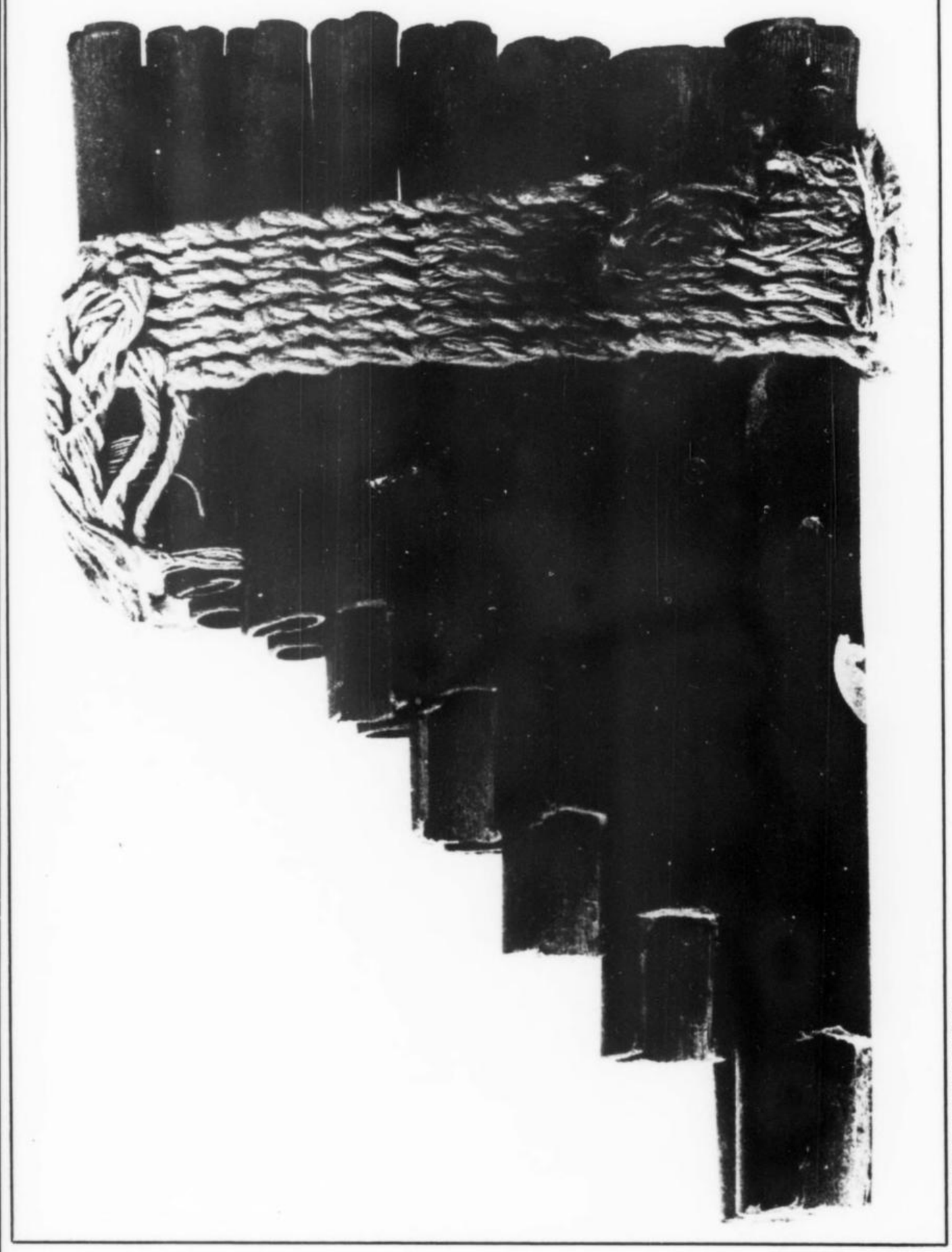
Quito (Ecuador) to the frontiers of Bolivia and Argentina.

Until the arrival of the Europeans, Andean women fastened their cloaks with a brooch shaped like a waxing moon whose masculine counterpart was the *Tumi* or sacrificial knife. This ambivalent sexual shape *(Moon-Tumi)* did not disappear in colonial or republican days but tended to be replaced by the shape of the soup spoon introduced by the Spaniards.

In Andean civilization there were two basic ritual objects: the *Conopa,* a stone figure shaped like a llama, and the *Kero,* a wooden receptacle with straight sides. The *Conopa*-llama symbol changed into a pottery bull, and in Ecuador the *Kero* was turned into a cup. The progression is suggestive: from moon to spoon; from reclining llama to bull; from *Kero* to cup. In each case the utilitarian shapes of the triumphant culture have been incorporated by the defeated culture, which apparently renounced its own sacred forms.

Among the Chinchero Indians of Peru and the Urochipayas of Bolivia, the *quipus,* a form of writing that uses knotted string, imitates a girl's tresses, since both words and hair come out of the head. No scribe was allowed to read the sacred letters without first donning a female wig. This special reading wig was kept in a fox-skin bag, the fox being a female deity symbolizing cunning and cleverness.

An even more famous example appears in the Oruro carnival in Bolivia and the Puño fiesta in Peru. They are basically the same feast, which derives from ancient pre-Spanish rituals practised between lakes Titicaca and Poopo. The devils' masks in these rituals are doubtless influenced by Catholic iconography, but they are variations of religious images of much earlier date: the heads of the god of



Photos © Musée de l'Homme, Paris

European soldiers; in the 18th century they were dressed like provincial governors, and in the 19th century they are shown wearing the military uniforms of creole generals.

The St. James of Callapa had moved even further into the future: stripped of the silks he wore a mere ten years ago, he was wearing green battle-dress.

The Callapa St. James also reflects another historical experience: he has the wig and glasses which, according to the sacristan, were worn by the *guerrilleros.*

What is the future of Andean culture? Many fear it will disappear in the process of industrialization which is under way in Latin America. For many, industrialization and modernization mean adopting Western cultural models.

This danger is compounded by the social structure of the Andean countries. A city-based white and mestizo minority dominates a great majority of poor, rural Indians and mestizos. To understand this phenomenon one must remember that the independence revolutions led by Washington in North America and by Bolivar in South America were basically oligarchic revolutions.

In countries like Peru and Bolivia, the creoles have been in power for 150 years, and of course think of themselves as Europeans who happened to be born in another continent.

The cultural uniformity which today's world is heading for is a danger for the whole human race. The survival and free development of cultures like that of the Andes broadens the scope of man's heritage.

■ **Pablo Macera**

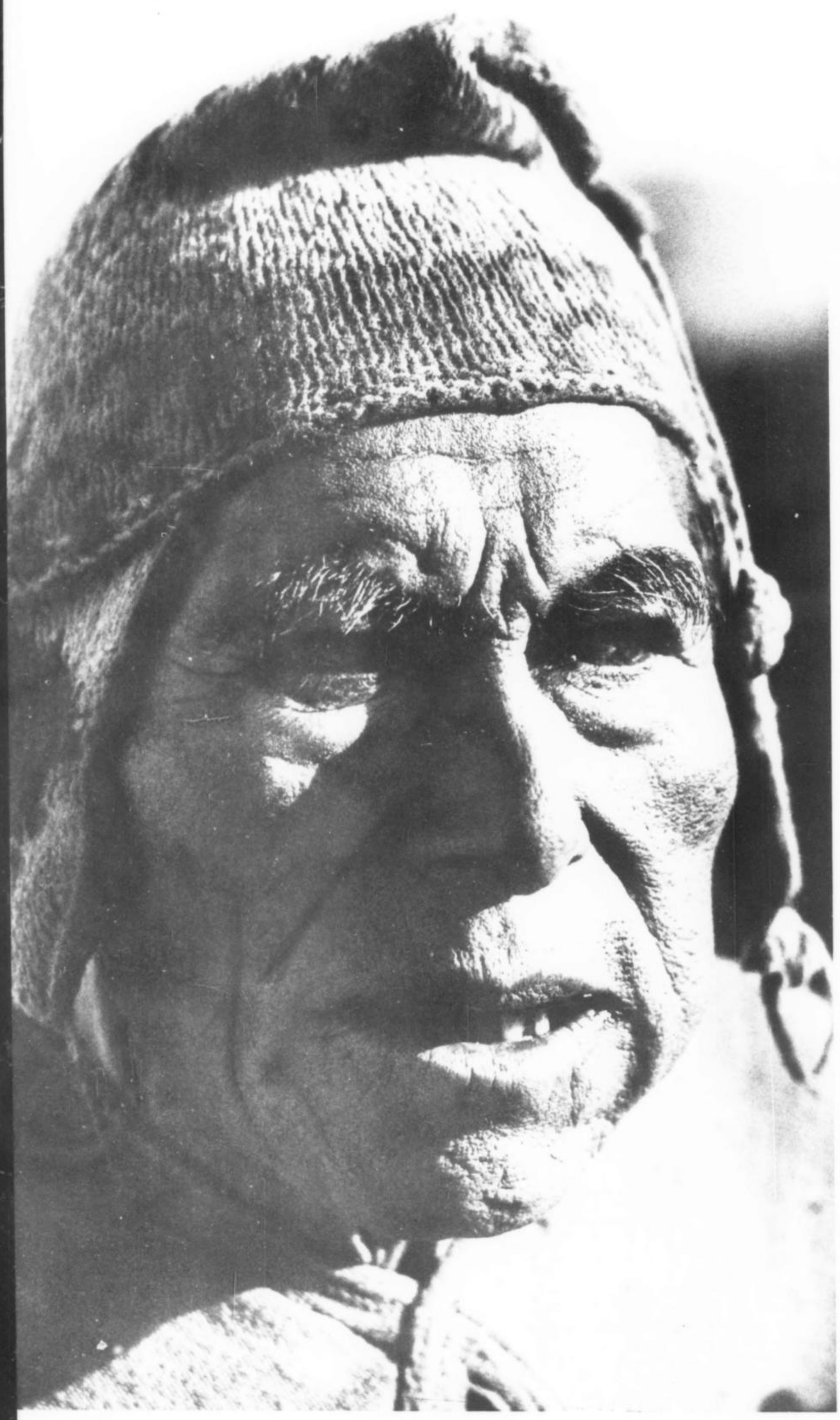
**PANPIPES AND STORIES IN STRING.** The Incas invented a remarkably efficient substitute for writing known as *quipus,* knotted strings of various colours (see drawing above left). A 16th-century Spanish chronicler noted that "It is incredible to see what the Incas can record in this way. All that books can present in the way of history, law, ceremonies and commercial accounts is expressed in *Quipus* with astonishing precision". *Quipus* are still used in many Indian communities in the Andes. Another survival from ancient times is the *rondador,* a kind of panpipe played by the Indians of Peru (above).

Chavin and that of the great deity Viracocha which has survived at Tihuanaco. The Andean gods worshipped more than 4,000 years ago are still dancing in the 20th century.

A few months ago, while visiting the Callapa sanctuary in the Department of Oruro (Bolivia), I was struck by the naive mural paintings of Noah's Ark, and even more fascinated by the figure of St. James over the main altar. The St. James *Matamores* (the Moor-slayer) of the Spanish reconquest of Spain from the Moors had been transformed into St. James *Mataindios* (the Indian-slayer) of the Spanish conquest of Latin America. The Amerindians took over St. James and identified him with *Illapa,* the thunder-god of their own religion.

Indian depictions of St. James were decked out with all the trappings of the enemy. The oldest look like 16th-century

## by Jorge Enrique Adoum



"IN Latin America, anyone who isn't descended from the Indians or the blacks just came off the ship." This saying, popularized despite its non-popular origins, exactly describes the state of ethnic and cultural intermixing in the continent today. But a devil's advocate looking back 400 years could argue that the Indians, the only natives on Latin American soil, saw both white and black men descend from the ships—the former from the bridge and the latter out of the bilges.

Intermingling began almost immediately, since the conquistadors brought no women with them. It has continued to such a degree that it provokes astonishment, perhaps because it is unique to Latin America (unlike the superimposition of cultures produced by conquest or colonialism in other parts of the world) and also because its ethnic components were more strongly different than those which formed the basis of racial intermingling in Europe or North America.

But one must specify the regions in which this racial and cultural fusion has occurred and define the levels it has reached. The situation in the Antilles, the Caribbean, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile—where the Amerindians have disappeared or survive only as small minorities—is quite unlike that of countries with large indigenous populations like Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and parts of Central America and of Mexico.

Whatever the level of cultural or ethnic intermingling in the latter regions, the phenomenon of acculturation has also occurred to some degree—the word acculturation being understood as "the transfer of cultural elements from one social group or people to another".

Cultural intermingling, like ethnic intermingling, presupposes equal participation in the mixing process: an enriching exchange produced by the addition of cultural and other values. Acculturation, on the other hand, entails a loss. Certain cultural elements—not always necessarily valuable or valid—may be imposed, directly or indirectly, on the original culture, or be adopted by it, to the detriment of its values.

When one hears talk of "incorporating the Indians into civilization" or of "integrating them into the life of the nation" in

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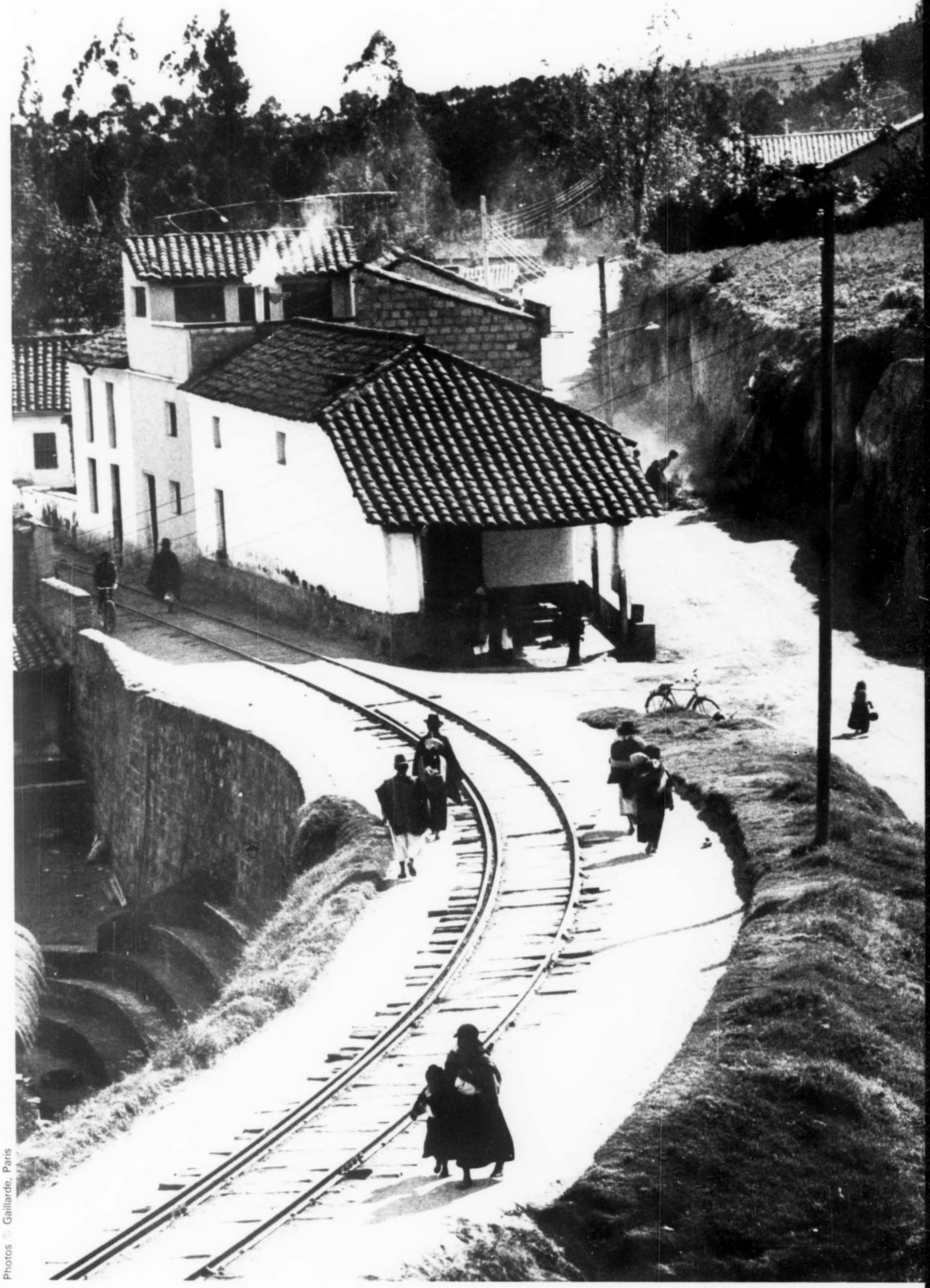
**JORGE ENRIQUE ADOUM,** *Ecuadorian poet and writer, has published several volumes of poetry, including an anthology,* Informe Personal Sobre La Situación *(Personal Report on the Situation, Madrid, 1973). His play about the Spanish conquest of the Inca empire, published in English as* The Sun Trampled Beneath the Horses' Hooves *(The Massachusetts Review, Winter-Spring 1974) has also been translated into French, Swedish and Polish and performed in several countries of Europe and Latin America. He has taken part in Unesco's programme of studies on Latin American cultures, and is now a member of the editorial staff of the* Unesco Courier.

# COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

## The modern world is bringing mixed blessings to the Indians of the cordilleras



**How can a people preserve its cultural identity when confronted with ways of life far different from its own? This is a very real problem in Latin America today, where increasing numbers of persons from isolated rural areas are coming into contact with city life for the first time. Even in once inaccessible villages like this one in the High Andes (right), improved transport and communications are making many changes in the traditional pattern of life.**

Photos © Gaillarde, Paris

countries where Amerindians constitute between 40 and 80 per cent of the population and are the major source of the nation's wealth as miners or farm workers, it is clear that "civilization" and "the nation" are white and mestizo, and not Amerindian.

But the curious fact is that in Latin America this discrimination is not racial but social and cultural. In nearly all Latin American countries where they constitute a large part of the population, the Amerindians have access, although sometimes only exceptionally, to higher education, to economic and even to political power. Indeed, there are men and women in the professions, landowners, civil servants and politicians who are more Amerindian than mestizo.

But in order to aspire to such high status, these people have had to renounce their culture, beliefs, customs, clothes and language. The official language, which people must learn in order to exercise their civic rights, is Spanish, which is also the language in which business is done.

It may be that Spanish has already absorbed all the words that it needs from the languages of the Quechua Indians; but the assimilated Indian learning Spanish renounces his own language, first for reasons of prestige, and secondly because it will be of no use to him in the new circles he will move in and because he will no longer need it to talk to his erstwhile fellow Amerindians. It sometimes even happens that Indian children in cities will not answer when addressed in Quechua.

The assimilation of isolated Indian groups goes hand in hand with a transition from a subsistence economy to a market economy. This determines intercultural contacts, be they sporadic or permanent.

When Indians remain in a state of isolation, they can only conceive of themselves in relation to their own community, which has a system of authority but no social classes. As the Peruvian writer José Carlos Mariategui has noted, the Amerindian "is never less free than when he is alone". He only acquires our notion of individual liberty when he comes into contact with the dominant culture... perhaps because it is at that moment that he loses his liberty.

This sense of community is traditionally expressed in institutions like the *prestamanos* (or "helping hand": unpaid collective help in roofing a neighbour's house) or the *minga* (collective work in communal fields or digging irrigation ditches). But the other, official, culture exploits this tradition of community life and work to provide unpaid labour, with fines for absenteeism, for road and railway construction and for building schools and churches. And although the Indians thus come into contact with new cultural forms—new tools, new architectural ideas—it would be a euphemism to speak of cultural intermingling.

Isolated groups of Indians in the High Andes speak of "we" much more than of "I", and are unlikely to use the words "I have" except when answering a specific question. This may be because they possess little; but more important than this, they have no notion of personal "possession".

Members of the community acquire this notion, together with the idea of individualism, when they come into contact with the villages or cities of the whites and mestizos. Here they also acquire such hitherto unknown values as adultery, prostitution, exploitation of women or the very notion of exploitation.

In the cities, the man from the High Andes can buy "modern" sandals, which are reproductions of his traditional footwear except that the cord soles have been replaced by ones cut from car tyres which last longer. But if he buys a bicycle—and he will now utter the words "I have"—he will go back to the countryside much faster but much more wearily than on his donkey, with his wife in front and child behind and a sheep slung across his shoulders. It is interesting to ask at what point he begins to feel different from his fellows, and who benefits from the time he saves—especially if he is working for someone else.

When the Indians drift to the towns,

# Three generations of cordillerans

Photo Hans Silvester — Rapho, Paris

which they are doing with increasing frequency as mechanization reduces the need for farm labourers, they generally become part of a subproletariat of drop-outs.

When one of them succeeds in becoming relatively well-off, he may command the moderate amount of respect accorded to mestizos. If he becomes more prosperous, he may win the consideration reserved for whites. His "rise" is reflected in a changed legal status: he has more rights and influence and, no matter how Amerindian his facial features may be, he automatically acquires a passport inscribed "White Race" without even asking for it.

These are the extreme cases of isolation and integration. But one can discern between the two a series of stages which for the moment appear to be irreversible. Without falling back into the white-mestizo paternalism which long predominated in literature, anthropology and sociology, and without wishing to idealize Amerindian society, it seems necessary to examine each individual case to see whether there has been any mutual enrichment or real intermingling of two or more cultures.

It was the haute couture fashion designers who introduced the vogue for ponchos and Andean zoomorphic textile designs to America and Europe. But when the Indians themselves weave their carpets, and replace these traditional designs by floral or Persian patterns glimpsed in some foreign catalogue, this is not a personal decision but a result of imposed urban tastes—the effect of market demand. Similarly, in Guatemala, the lovely highland Indian pitchers of traditional shapes and styles are nowadays made of plastic.

It is true that in the museums of Europe hundreds of thousands of people enrich their own culture by visiting exhibitions of pre-Hispanic Indian art. But the inhabitants of the High Andes have no inkling of such events and sometimes know nothing of such art forms. Far from continuing the artistic traditions of even their recent forebears, they are now producing pottery adorned with Walt Disney figures.

It may be objected that the other side of this cultural "enrichment" lies in tourist consumption of work produced by authentic local craftsmen. But the basic and immense difference is that the tourist acquires a decorative object at no loss to himself, whereas the Amerindians' acquisition of plastic articles reflects a confused urge to be "modern" and "be like" someone else—the first stages of his incorporation into a "superior" culture. The same outlook is found in young villagers who dress up in city clothes on Sundays or, worse still, when they proudly don Batman or Tarzan T-shirts like some city youngsters.

Photo © Gaillarde, Paris

**Once totally cut off from the outside world, the Indians living in the Andes of Peru and Bolivia proudly keep up the cultural traditions which colour so many aspects of their lives, from everyday tasks to dress and jewellery. Their sense of belonging to a community is so strong that the idea of loneliness is totally alien to them. Shown here, three generations of Indians of the High Andes.**

Photo Hans Silvester — Rapho, Paris

In a small Ecuadorian village on the threshold of the Amazonian jungle, the local schoolgirls recently took part in the fiesta dressed in crêpe-paper costumes and posing like ballerinas in *Swan Lake,* on a float decorated like a gondola. This was probably not a unique event. It would be highly interesting to know by what mysterious ways this Venetian art form had penetrated into the jungle. It would be less disturbing if one could be sure that these girls had been taught something about Italian culture and, more important, about their own. (I have no idea whether they parade canoes full of Amazonian "Indians" in festivals in Nice or Venice, but I doubt whether anyone would consider such pathetic imitations of the "exotic" as a cultural enrichment.)

Serious Latin American, and sometimes European, music is often based on Indian rhythms but does not use its instruments. The Indians do, in fact, continue to play their own music. But in addition to the traditional flute and drum they play the Spanish guitar—now so popular that it has become Latin American *par excellence*—as well as violins, harps, harmoniums and accordions.

These are what they take to their fiestas, which usually coincide with those of the Catholic saints. But after the mass or the procession (during which the Virgin has been wearing a cloak encrusted with banknotes, coins, dried corn ears and bits of newspapers and old mirrors) the Indians celebrate their own ancient rite, of whose profound mythological content the other, official culture knows nothing.

During these fiestas, beer is drunk as well as the traditional *chicha,* or corn liquor, and although at fiesta-time the Indians get their only opportunity to eat meat, they do not drink milk (the word does not even exist in Quechua) or eat eggs, because these products must be sold on the "other culture's" market. Thus, some Indians have become so conditioned that they would never dream of eating eggs, even if they were given some as a present. In this way, the inadequacies of a meagre diet imposed by poverty, deficient in proteins and excessive in carbohydrates are exacerbated by taboos of economic origin.

Although the Indians do not know it, their only compensation has been that two of their indigenous products—potatoes and tobacco—have conquered the world, and that city fare—including business lunches and receptions for VIPs—is often graced by "typical native dishes" of the sort which most Indians can never afford. And often they are not typical at all.

It is becoming harder every day for Amerindians to live in complete isolation. The Cuna Indians of Panama, who inhabit the San Blas archipelago (said to have as many islands as there are days in the year) have traditionally preserved their culture by avoiding contact with the continent. However, one of their *nele-kantules* or medicine-men has complained that "Before, it was easy to fight against this so-called civilization because it was men. Now it's worse, because it's machines". He was talking about television. Because of civilization, Indians do not have to go anywhere to make cultural contact, since concept-carrying machines come right into their homes and stay there.

Transistor radios have invaded the whole Andes region. But between the life of the Indian communities and the idealized image of urban life, there is such a brutal contradiction that it must produce many psychological tensions.

Indeed, radio and television may create a feeling among the Indians that their lifestyle is old-fashioned and their houses ugly and unhygienic. This is creating a dependence on luxury products which are alien to their way of life, together with a dependence on the people who produce them. It also produces a sense of frustration as they realize that their own cultural values are despised.

It now seems impossible to preserve cultures intact. Each one must assimilate the elements it considers most useful and appropriate and not those imposed by any kind of power structure.

In defining and preserving their cultural identity, our peoples must first recognize themselves in a mirror. But the mirror must be neither convex nor concave, for if it is, they will find a distorted image of the face they are trying to identify.

■ **Jorge Enrique Adoum**

Photo : Dominique Desjardins, Paris

**ROVING CULTURE. Radio, television and cinema can be invaluable teaching aids but can also be a vehicle for mediocrity. If children like these Indians (above) peering at "moving pictures" on a square in La Paz (Bolivia) are fed a diet of poor-quality films, what opinion will they form of "civilization" and "progress", not to mention their own cultures? Moreover, when Indians leave their mountain villages to seek work in the towns (below), the blandishments and benefits of urban life often lead them to turn their backs on their own cultural traditions.**

Photo : Gaillarde, Paris

# THE LAND-LOCKED ISLAND OF PARAGUAY

*by Augusto Roa Bastos*

Photo © Almasy, Paris

**Paraguay, like most Latin American countries, has a large rural population, amounting to some 70 per cent of the total. Almost all of them are Indians (above) who communicate among themselves in Guarani, a language which is spoken in Paraguay's towns and cities as well as in the rural areas.**

PARAGUAY has always been a virtually unknown quantity in Spanish-American culture; in more ways than one, it is "a land-locked island" in the heart of the continent. What is more, observers of Latin America have, for some mysterious reason, rarely bothered to pinpoint the reasons which have made Paraguay a *terra incognita,* closed to exploration and analysis.

Paraguay is actually one of the Latin American nations and peoples that has known the greatest vicissitudes. Paraguay's history reads like a melodrama, a non-stop tragedy punctuated by moments of great and sublime significance.

The basic stages in its history are as follows:

It was from this land-locked island that the conquistadors, obsessed with the myth of Eldorado, set forth in search of treasure.

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**AUGUSTO ROA BASTOS,** *of Paraguay, won an international reputation with his book* Hijo de Hombre, *published in English as* Son of Man *by Victor Gollancz, London, 1965. His latest novel* Yo el Supremo *is required reading for students of Latin American literature in a number of European universities. He is currently teaching Latin American literature at the university of Toulouse (France).*

In its heyday, towards the end of the 16th century, it represented the largest single colonial administrative unit. Paraguay was then the "Giant Province of the Indies", and it stretched across almost half the continent, from the torrid tropical forests to the icy southern tip of Tierra del Fuego.

When the mirage of gold disappeared, the conquistadors were left only with the vast resources represented by the indigenous population, which eventually turned out to be poor compensation for their loss.

They began to exploit "the gold of their bodies", a dark, living metal which, instead of running out, multiplied constantly. It provided them with slave labour for the subsistence economy of the *encomiendas,* or slave holdings, and with slave women for their harems. It also provided them with children of mixed blood, the *criollos,* who were later to outdo their parents in exploiting their half-brothers, who had not had the "privilege" of being the children of Europeans.

In the early years of the 17th century, the vast amorphous Giant Province began to shrink and break up, losing access to the sea in the process. Now land-locked, it turned into a poor province which the metropolitan administration abandoned to its fate.

Meanwhile, the Jesuits had begun an incredible experiment which combined proselytizing with the exploitation of the indigenous population. They founded the Indian communities called *Reducciones* which, under the name of the Guarani Republic, came to form an empire within the Spanish empire, with which it eventually clashed. Based on a system that made full use of the division of labour, the enter-

prise yielded profits beyond the wildest expectations of its founders.

The province also witnessed the first mass insurrection against Spanish absolutism. This was the so-called revolt of the *communeros* which lasted from 1717 to 1735, and in some ways resembled the Revolt of the *Communeros,* or Commoners, of Castile against the usurpation of the Emperor Charles V in the 16th century.

Thirty years after these events, in 1767, the Jesuits were expelled by Charles III from all the territories of the Spanish empire. The king saw the empire built by the Jesuits not only as a virtually impregnable stronghold against his authority but also as a dangerous example to his corrupt and tyrannical colonial administration.

For the Jesuit system of temporal and spiritual organization was more humane than that of the *encomiendas,* as well as being the first of its kind in America to preserve the language and culture of the indigenous population and their traditional modes of production.

It is not surprising, then, that certain chroniclers spoke of the "communist" regime set up in the *Reducciones:* a kind of communist republic-empire. Such semantic confusion could not, however, conceal the true nature of an experiment which preceded the formation of an independent sovereign state in Paraguay by over a century.

The independent state of Paraguay began its existence under the dictatorship of José Gaspar Rodriguez Francia (1816-1840) and flourished under Carlos Antonio López and his son Francisco Solano López. But in 1865 Argentina and the Brazilian Empire entered into a secret agreement. Drawing Uruguay along with them, they declared war on Paraguay with the blessing of the British.

The war of the "Triple Alliance", which lasted five years, was a bloodbath. The male population was all but decimated, and the countryside plundered. It marked the end of the independent state, laid the country open to extortion and led to many years of dependence on the victorious countries.

The martyrdom of this freedom-loving people constitutes a break in the continuity of Paraguay's history: from one of Latin America's most advanced nations, the country was turned into one of its poorest and most backward.

Paraguayan culture must be seen against this background of historical events and geographical isolation which provides clues to its enigmatic fate as a nation.

But one cannot hope to understand Paraguay without taking into account its linguistic problem. For 400 years now, two languages have coexisted in the country: Spanish and Guarani—the language of the conquerors and the language of the conquered. These two languages are used as parallel, though not complementary, means of expression for a whole society.

In this, Paraguay is unique in Latin America. For a long time it was commonplace to say that Paraguay was a bilingual country and that this bilingualism was an obstacle to its cultural development or, as others would have it, a handicap to its material progress.

According to the leading authority on the subject, Father Bartomeu Meliá, "The description of the Paraguayan linguistic situation as 'typically' bilingual is very widespread and is accepted even by some linguists. But Paraguayan bilingualism is a myth.

"Since the time of the conquest and the formation of the colony, Paraguay has always constituted a unique case of bilingualism. Two languages and two cultures have existed side by side in apparent harmony, each influencing and complementing the other. To this extent Paraguay seems to represent the triumph of the colonial ideal: antagonism between master

## A living tradition at the loom

**Handed down from generation to generation, the art of weaving has always been one of the most important occupations of the Indian women of Paraguay. Centre photo: two villagers weaving ponchos with "typically Indian" designs. Village weavers today manufacture more of these ponchos, much sought-after by tourists, than other traditional garments such as embroidered shirts. Left, Paraguayan men construct a "weft" of palings around their farm.**

Photos © Almasy, Paris

and slave has been overcome. Furthermore, as Governor Lázaro de Ribera complained at the end of the 18th century, 'We have reached such a point that the language of the conquered peoples has become the dominant one.' "

But for the child with a European father and an Indian mother, the natural mother tongue was Guarani, and Spanish was a language imposed as a symbol of authority. It was the language which the mestizo would in turn use to impose his own authority on the Indians.

Under the harsh conditions of the encomiendas, which were nevertheless more liberal in Paraguay than in other parts of conquered Latin America, mestizos and Indians felt that the language of their father or master, as the case happened to be, was a more integral part of his dominance than the arms, tools, food, houses and customs which were the trappings of his power.

In the missionary settlements of the Jesuits, however, sermons and prayers were in Guarani. There, the Indian was not forced to change his language. He did, however, have to change his rituals, his liturgy, his gods, and his conception of nature, of the world and of the universe—although the embers of all these still glow brightly today in Indian myths about the universe.

**CONTINUED PAGE 69**

## Birthplace of a nation

**Below, the *Casa de la Independencia* (Independence House) in Asunción, capital of Paraguay, where a group of patriots gathered on the night of 14 May 1811 before deposing the Spanish governor, Bernardo de Velazco, in a bloodless coup d'état. A month later, the independence of the Paraguayan Republic was proclaimed. Of all the capitals of Latin-American countries with a large Indian population, Asunción is the only one in which bilingualism (Spanish-Guarani) is widespread, although here and in the country's other major cities Guarani is increasingly losing ground to Spanish.**

Photo © Jesús Ruiz Nestosa, Paraguay

# DEBUNKING THE 'BLACK LEGEND'

## A hard look at the historical role of Spain in Latin America

***by Roberto Fernandez Retamar***

**ROBERTO FERNANDEZ RETAMAR,** *Cuban poet and essayist, is a professor at Havana university and director of the magazine* Casa de las Américas. *His essays and anthologies of his poems have been translated into a number of languages.*

IN recent years, the debate about Latin American culture has become increasingly lively. Emphasis has been put on the indigenous Amerindian and African heritage, while the differences—or, as some would have it, the affinities—which characterize Latin America's relationship with the West have been pointed up.

But there is another heritage, which one might call "intermediate", neither indigenous nor strictly speaking Western: the Iberian heritage.

It is obvious that much of Latin American culture comes from Spain. But although this Spanish influence should not be exaggerated, it should neither be minimized nor dismissed.

Latin Americans received much more than their language from Spain, but language indicates the special way in which the Iberian heritage was transmitted.

Referring to the unity of the Spanish language, the Spanish historian Ramón Menéndez Pidal said, "One can say that there are two types of educated Spanish, just as there are American and British versions of English, primarily distinguished by peculiarities of pronunciation."

This obvious phonetic difference can be considered a sign of richness, and fortunately it has not endangered the unity of our language, since "the peoples who emerged from the former Spanish Empire communicate much more with one another today than when they belonged to a single state". The unity of the Spanish language has thus been preserved, enriched by the contributions of the various regions in which it is spoken.

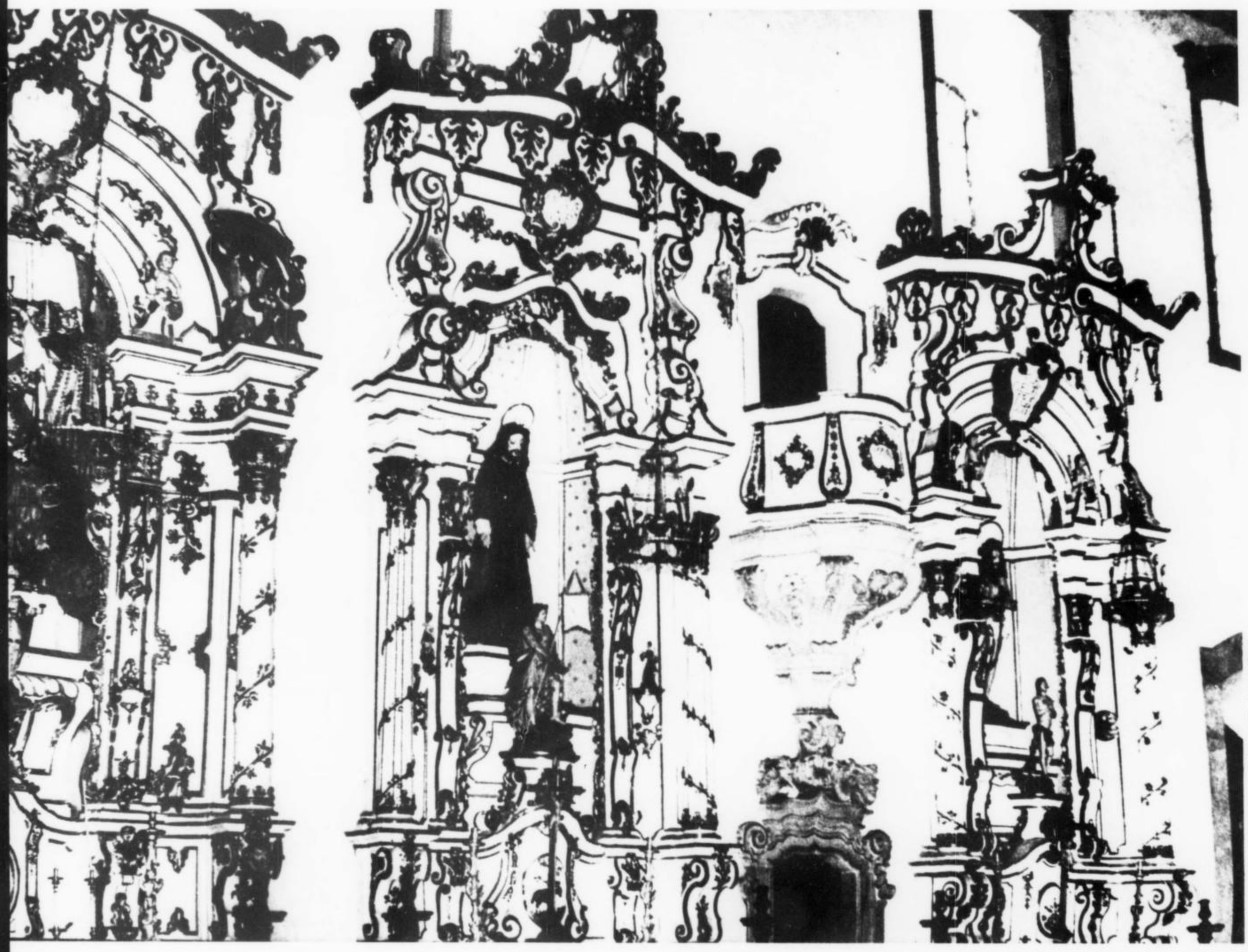
In other respects, the situation is much more complex. We Spanish Americans like to say that we descend not from those who stayed behind in Spain but from those who came to America and whose children stopped being Spanish, becoming first creoles, and later, intermingling with other ethnic groups, Latin Americans.

Spanish America began breaking its ties with the battered and decadent Spanish Empire more than 150 years ago; and Spain was to lose its last American possession, Cuba, in 1898. Spanish America, meanwhile, was trying to define its own identity by making a sharp distinction between the old and the new continent. It was a complex task to determine what differentiated it from the mother country, but it proved even more difficult to propose distinctively Latin American solutions. As a result, many were lured into the arms of other greedy powers: as if, as the Cuban writer José Marti (1853-1895) exclaimed, changing masters amounted to being free.

A readiness to accept "Western" solutions was typical of certain Spanish-American groups who were avid supporters of

**CONTINUED PAGE 58**

**A particularly rich form of art and architecture developed in Latin America during the late 17th century and the 18th century (see following double page) with the intermingling of Iberian and indigenous cultures. Left, an example of this "colonial style" art: a late 18th-century rococo portrait of a Viceroy of New Spain (Mexico). Equally striking is the church at Ouro Preto (below) in the Province of Minas Gerais (Brazil) where the churches are notable for their flamboyant motifs of garlands and scrolls and eloquent sculpture.**



Photos © F. Hebert-Stevens, Editions Arthaud, Paris

# Extravaganza of baroque

Photo © Companhia Malhoramentos de São Paulo

Latin American art and architecture is marked by a strong penchant for the baroque. As the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier has noted: "Our art has always been baroque: from the splendid pre-Columbian sculptures to the drawings in Maya and Aztec manuscripts, from the colonial cathedrals and monasteries to the best of today's novels". The baroque style is particularly evident in what is known as "colonial art", which is strongly marked by Spanish and Portuguese influence but has a lushness and liveliness that are specifically Latin American. On this double page, we present examples of the richness of this art. (1) A prophet by the great 18th-century Brazilian architect-sculptor O Aleijadhinho on the terrace of the church of Buen Jesús de Matosinhos at Congonhas do Campo (Brazil); (2) the episcopal palace at Lima (Peru), one of the gems of colonial architecture; (3) detail inside a church at Bahia (Brazil); such exuberant ornamentation is a characteristic feature of many Latin American buildings; (4) 17th-century portrait of an Inca princess holding sacred flowers; (5) vaulting in the church of Santiago de Pomata (Peru), in which the Indian artist depicted Andalusian forms and motifs, themselves strongly influenced by the Arab art of Spain.

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Photo © Almasy, Paris

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Photo Elliott Erwitt © Magnum, Paris

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Photo © F. Herbert-Stevens, Editions Arthaud, Paris

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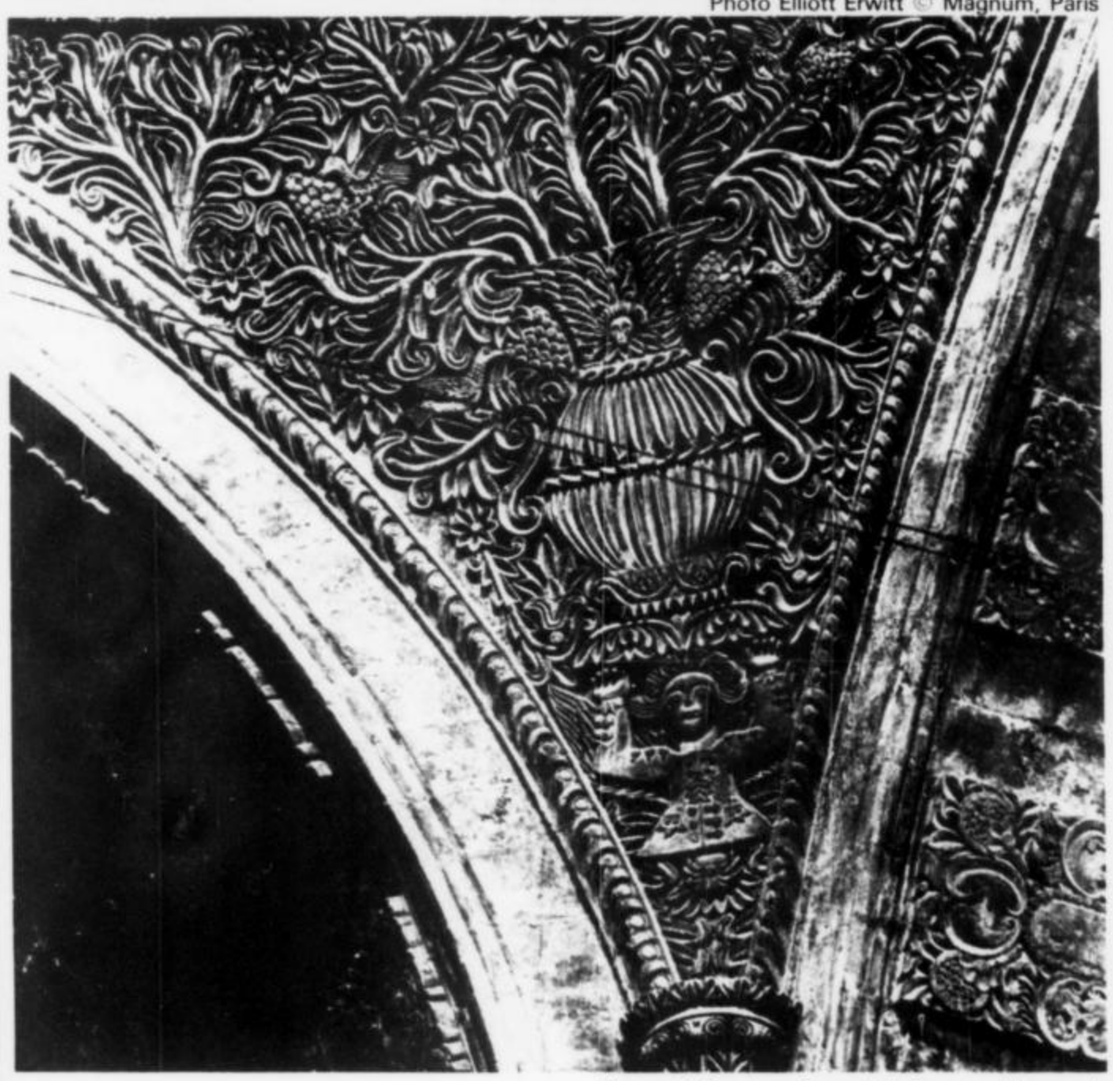

Photo © Graziano Gasparini, Caracas, Venezuela

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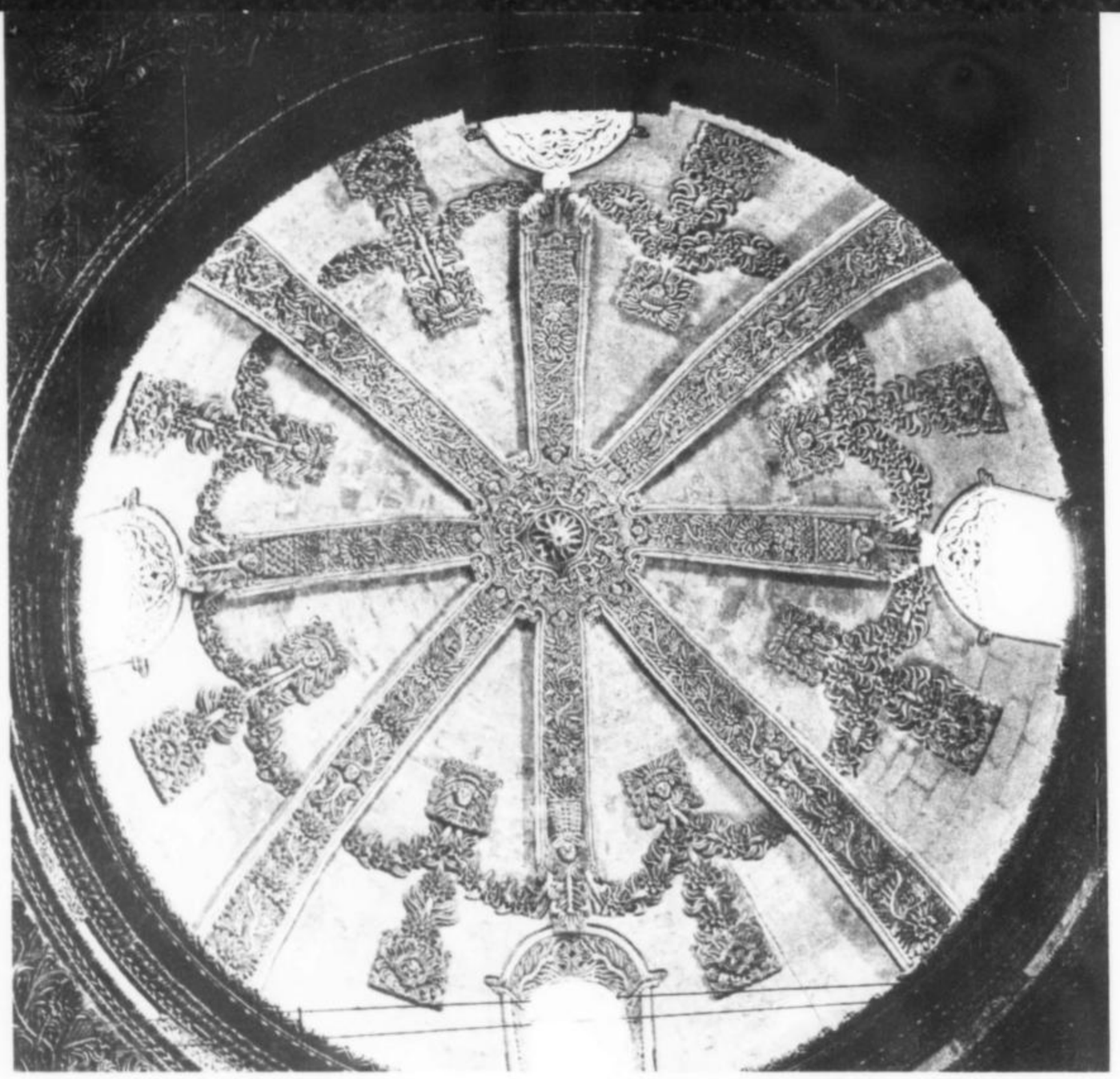
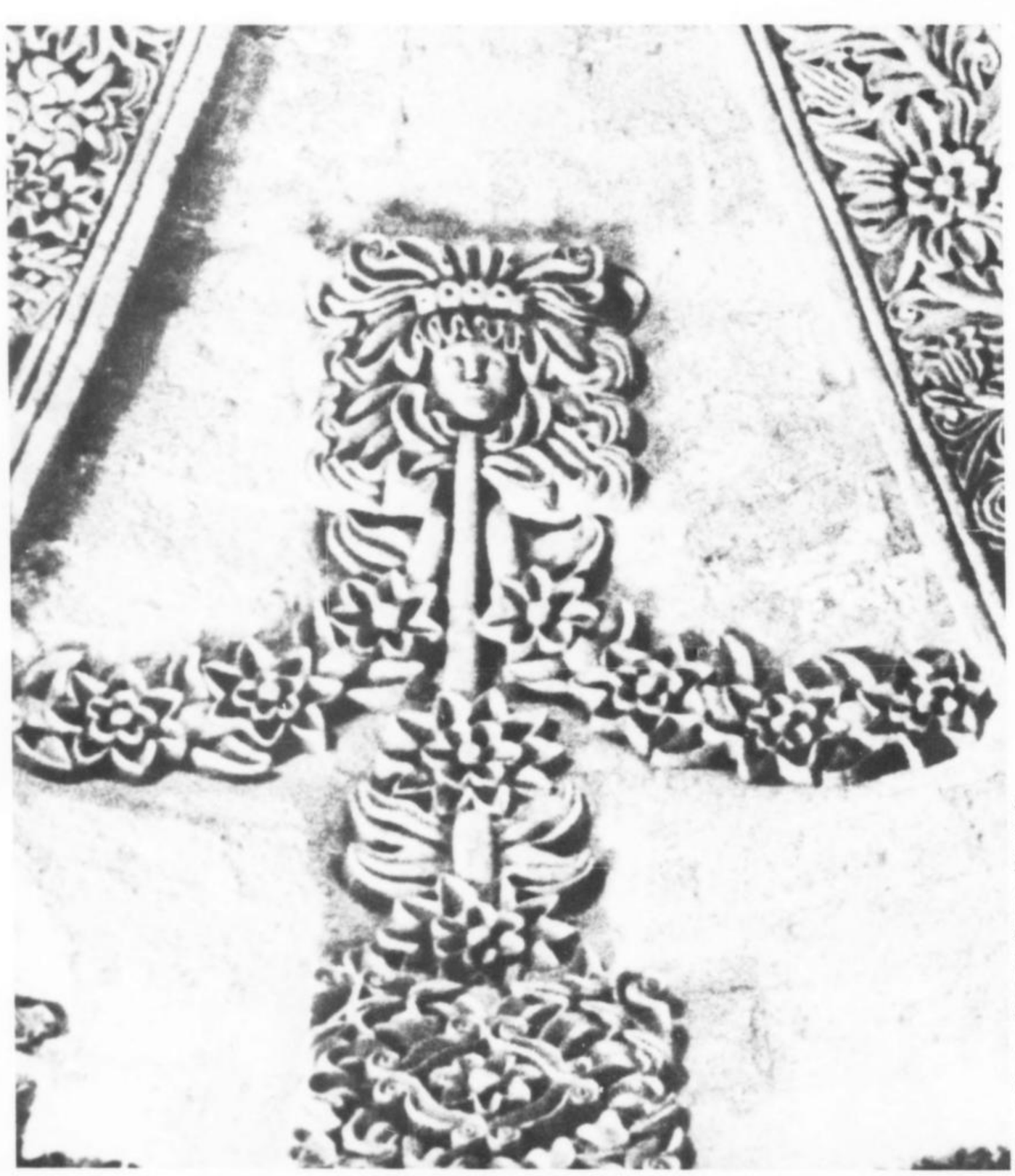


**INCA ARABESQUES.** The dome of the church of Santiago de Pomata is one of the most remarkable examples of the mestizo style of architectural decoration in the Andes. Between each ornamental "spoke" of the radial design, which follows Andalusian tradition, whorls and arabesques form Indian motifs (detail below).



modernization. It was encouraged by the pitiful state into which Spain had fallen and its iniquitous exploitation of the new nations. But it was also encouraged by the fact that, since the 16th century, Spain and all things Spanish had come under the stigma of the "Black Legend", which made the word "Spanish" synonymous with purblind reactionary cruelty. Many Spanish Americans rejected their Hispanic heritage as a result.

The Black Legend was apparently the product of an understandable revulsion against the monstrous crimes committed in the Americas by the Spanish conquistadors. But even a minimal respect for historical truth shows that this is simply false. Of course there were crimes, and monstrous crimes at that. But when compared with others committed in following centuries, they were no more monstrous than those of the metropolitan powers that followed the Spanish imperial example, sowing death and destruction throughout the world.

**PLUMED PROFILE.** Head topped with a crest of feathers is carved on the door of the church of Paucarpata, near Arequipa (Peru). This product of Spanish colonial art recalls the forms on certain pieces of pre-Columbian pottery.

Photos © Graziano Gasparini, Caracas, Venezuela

The conquests carried out by the other Western powers were not lacking in murders and acts of destruction. What they did lack, however, were scrupulous men like Bartolomé de Las Casas, who championed Indian rights (see *Unesco Courier,* June 1975), and such debates about the legitimacy of the conquest as the one launched by the Dominicans, which shook the Spanish Empire.

This does not mean that dissenters, who represented a small minority, managed to make their views prevail; but they did manage to defend them before the highest authorities. They were heard and their ideas were to some extent acted on.

According to the Chilean scholar Alejandro Lipschutz, "the Black Legend is worse than simplistic: it is malicious propaganda. It is simplistic because *all* imperialist conquests have taken an equally traumatic form and continue to do so".

Laurette Séjourné, the Mexican archeologist, admits that "It is now clear that systematic condemnation of the Spaniards has played a pernicious role in this vast drama, because it takes the occupation of Latin America out of its world context. Colonialism is the mortal sin of the whole of Europe... No other nation would have behaved better... On the contrary, Spain boasts one important distinction here: it is the only country to date in which powerful voices were raised against the act of imperial conquest".

The Black Legend was concocted with one aim in view: to discredit Spain, the leading European power in the 16th century. Other powers of the time were conspiring to usurp its place, and eventually they succeeded. Thus it was the bourgeoisie of the other colonial powers which invented the Black Legend.

The Legend was a skilful ideological weapon in the inter-colonial power struggle which accompanied the rise of capitalism and was to last several centuries (although by the end of the 17th century the outcome was virtually decided in favour of the new colonial powers).

In any case, it is important to remember that there were not one but two cultures in Spain, as in any other country: a ruling-class culture and a popular one; a culture of the oppressors and of the oppressed. The latter culture was the living and authentic one, and it is this which we Spanish Americans stand for.

Few countries, moreover, were so fully conscious of this duality as Spain. The idea of an external duality (Europe/Spain) was to become a constant theme of Spanish thought and literature from the onset of the country's decline. It no doubt sprang from the fact that Spain was first in the forefront of capitalist development and European expansion, and that it was to be outdistanced and finally left behind by the capitalist movement it had contributed to.

The Spanish writer Mariona José de Larra's famous epitaph is revealing. In his *All Souls' Day 1836* he noted: "Here lies half of Spain, it was killed by the other half".

It is no wonder then that the anti-Spanish Black Legend reflects one of the various and intolerable forms of racism. One need only recall the classic remark that "Africa begins at the Pyrenees", which expresses the West's distaste for everything different from itself, a difference epitomized in this case by Africa. Here again traditionalist Spain went hopelessly wrong in being offended by this assessment.

There is a ridiculous notion that because "Eternal Spain" was occupied for centuries by Arab infidels whom it finally succeeded in expelling, it consequently preserved Catholic purity and eliminated the "Islamic barbarian threat" from Europe. This can be countered by pointing to a far more potent truth: Spanish Christians, Arabs and Jews lived together in Spain for centuries and influenced one another fruitfully.

But Spain was not only to be a link between Christianity and Islam. It also served as a bridge between Europe and the vast Islamic world, where Greek, Indian and Persian influences had been assimilated by the Arabs.

It is thus correct to state that not only Africa but Asia as well begins at the Pyrenees; among other factors, this helped to resuscitate the languishing culture of Europe.

Alejo Carpentier is fond of reflecting on the sad fate of the Caribe Indians, a proud and combative people who came from the Orinoco Basin to the shores of the sea to which they gave their name. Their battle cry was "Only the Caribes are men", but when they came into contact with the proud and warlike Spaniards in their expansion across the seas, they met a people with a similar battle cry.

But the sails, swords and crosses of Spain were as puny as the Caribes' canoes, arrowheads and war cries, and they went down before the inexorable development of capitalism. Spain and her history were cast aside, with all the philosophical, artistic, scientific, legal and technical contributions she had made. Even Spain's introduction of the Europeans into the Americas was forgotten, together with the gold and silver she had brought from the New World, wealth which ended in the greedy hands of German and Genoese bankers who sarcastically referred to the proud nobles of Spain as "our Indians".

"Despite all this", the French historian Pierre Vilar says, "Velázquez's Spain was still prestigious. It inspired the classical French 17th century." Centuries were to pass before the new European powers would pardon Spain for this superiority. The Black Legend was to be the form their "pardon" took.

There is no need to insist on the closeness we Spanish Americans feel to that other, democratic Spain, the Spain of Las Casas and the great Dominicans of the 16th century who defended the Amerindians: the Spain of thinkers like Vivès and the 16th-century Erasmians like Servet, Suárez, Feijoo, Jovellanos and Blanco White—even if some of them had to do their work in exile. The Spain of those writers who began producing after most of Latin America had achieved independence: Larra, Pi y Margall, Costa Iglesias, Cajal and, above all, Antonio Machado. The Spain whose people gave birth to an offspring of American rebels.

This Spain opens our eyes to a complex and fascinating constellation of great men and works: Hispano-Arabic art, *El Cid* and the picaresque novel, Garcilaso, St. Teresa, Cervantes, St. John of the Cross, Góngora, Quevado, Calderon, El Greco, Velázquez, Goya, Unamuno, Valle-Inclán, Machado, Picasso, De Falla, Lorca, Bunuel.

So what on earth is the point of the defenders of the Black Legend telling us that the horrors of Spanish reaction should make us forget this other inheritance? What point is there in rejecting a cultural tradition because of the momentary aberrations of certain groups in that country? Does colonialism stop us admiring Shakespeare or Virginia Woolf or Bernard Shaw? Rabelais or Malraux? Pushkin, Tolstoy or Dostoyevski? Goethe or Brecht? Dante or Pavese?

The truth is that we feel proud that this other Spain is also ours, and that we would be impoverished if we rejected it.

■ **Roberto Fernández Retamar**

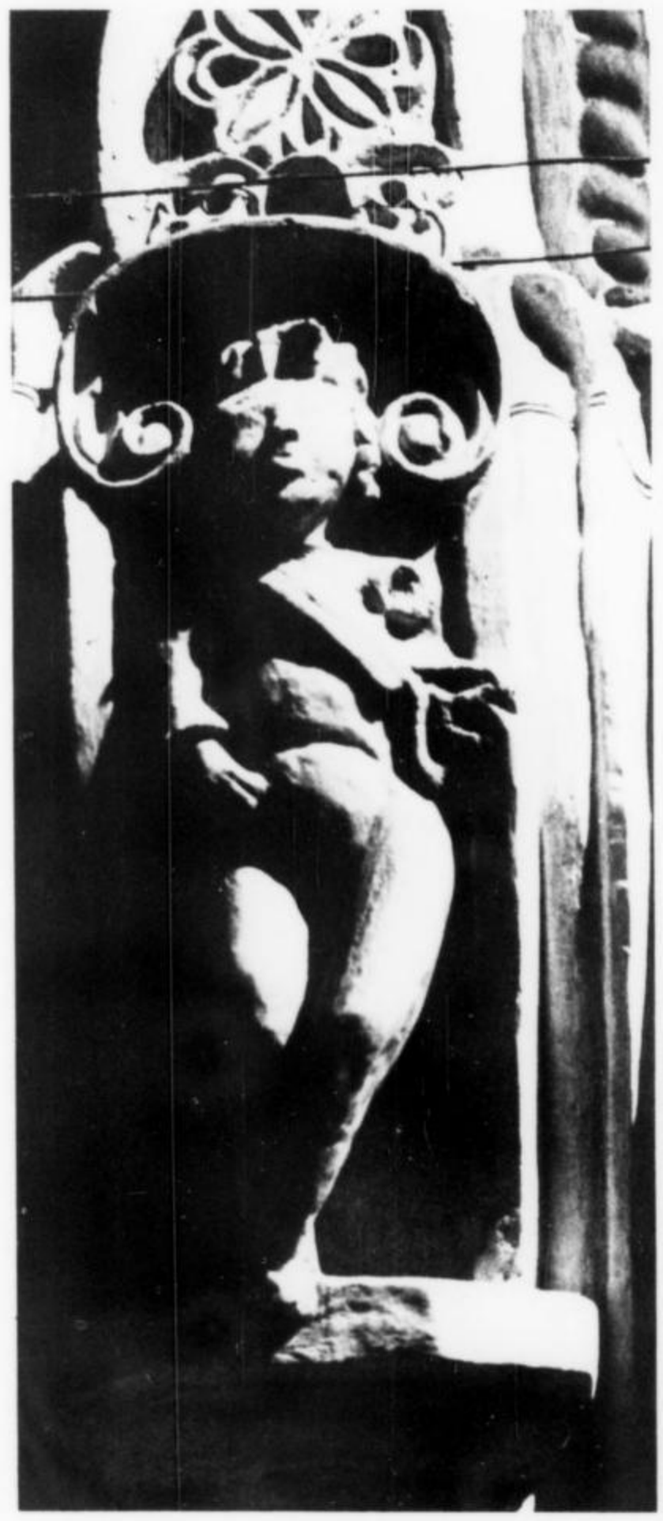
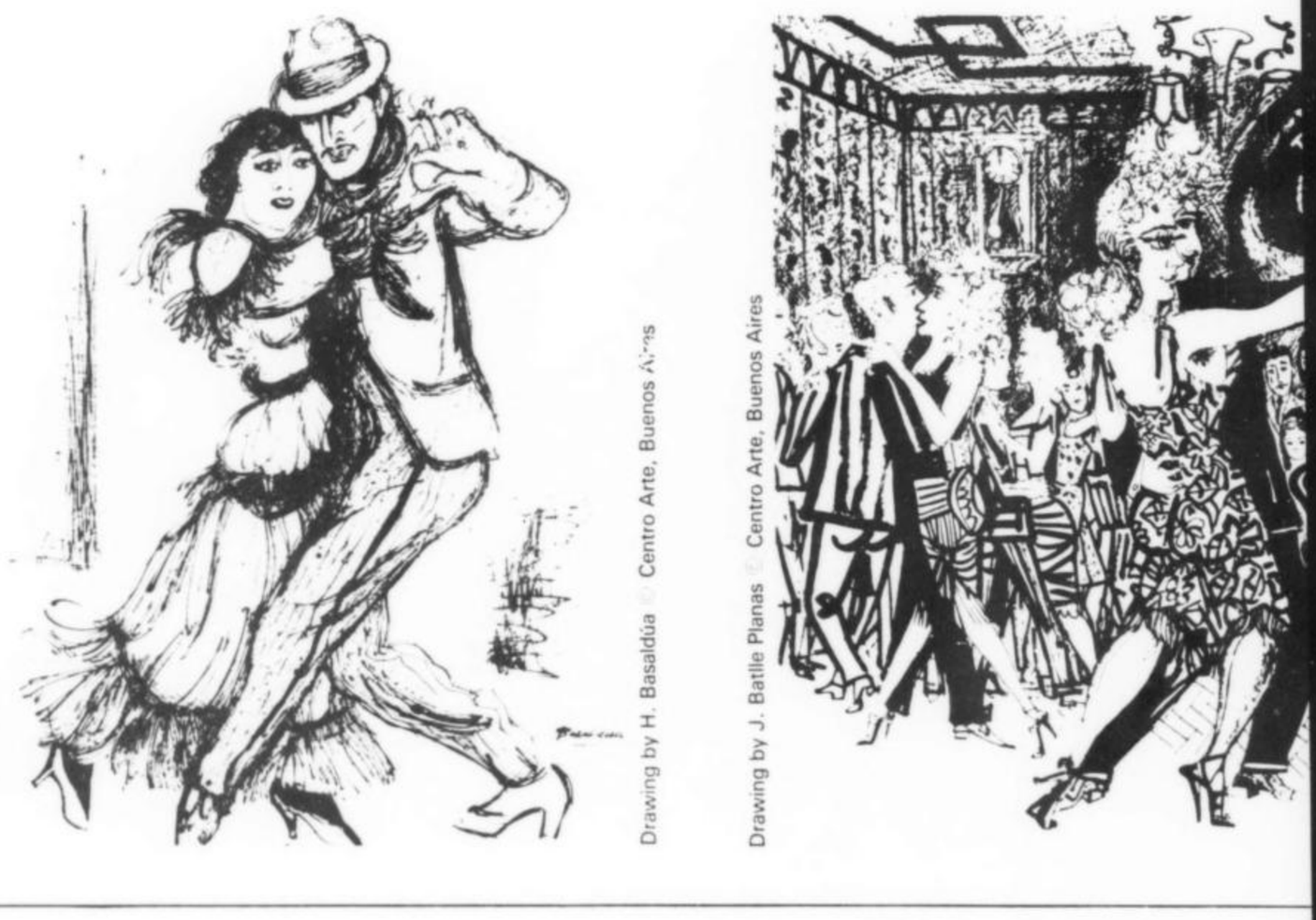


Photo © Graziano Gasparini, Caracas, Venezuela

**MYSTERIOUS STATUE carved on the facade of the Casa de las Recogidas (House of the Repentant) at Potosí in Bolivia bears a surprising resemblance to the high-relief sculptures in such Hindu temples as those at Elephanta Island and Konarak (India). It is not known how this "exotic" figure came to adorn a baroque building in the Andean highlands.**

# THE TANGO TANGLE

*by César Fernandez Moreno*



Drawing by H. Basaldúa © Centro Arte, Buenos Aires

Drawing by J. Batlle Planas © Centro Arte, Buenos Aires

WHEN we Argentinians set out in search of our identity, we usually encounter a void.

The landscape of the pampa is not a landscape at all; in the words of the Spanish essayist Ortega y Gasset, it is no more than a promise of one. In the northwest there are a few lingering remnants of the Inca culture and in the northeast something of Guarani culture. But only "frontier" forms of these cultures have survived. Patagonia is an immense region, virtually uninhabited, nothing but a road.

For the people of Buenos Aires, known as *Porteños* to mark the capital's role as a great seaport, the problem is even more serious. Buenos Aires is such a cosmopolitan city that it is almost impossible to define its identity.

So we must start with the assumption that the typical Porteño has no cultural identity of his own or, put in another way, his cultural identity lies in not having one. This is a fair criticism, and one which Argentinians from outside the capital would level against the Porteños—a criticism which is serious as well as just since more than one-third of Argentina's population lives in the Buenos Aires conurbation.

Most Porteños are second- or third-generation immigrants. They often tease each other about the nationality of their forebears. The *Gallego* (the nickname given the Spaniard) makes fun of the *Ruso* (the Jew); the Ruso mocks the *Tano* (the Italian) and the Tano derides the Gallego. In short, everyone makes fun of everyone else. Yet beneath it all runs a deep feeling of brotherhood.

At what level of society is the typical Porteño to be found? Certainly not among the landowners, for they have been "depersonalized" by their rural and nationalist commitments; they resemble equivalent élites in other countries. Not among the executives, filled with admiration for "the American way of life". Not among the intellectuals, who are for the most part set on behaving like Europeans. Nor among the working class, whose life is suburban rather than urban.

The typical Porteño is found primarily in the heart of Buenos Aires, in a social class consisting mainly of shopkeepers, small manufacturers and office workers.

It is here that one finds all the traits of the Porteño: a comfortable, reasonably hedonistic life, a certain awareness of this hedonism, an irreverent and flaccid political involvement. As many of these characteristics are also found in the neighbouring city of Montevideo, a friendly rivalry has grown up between the Porteños and their Uruguayan brothers.

A brief list of Porteño characteristics would include:

- A love of café life (no doubt imported from Spain) and its activities: dice and billiards. Café life tends to be identified with friendship.
- A fondness for cabarets (a term obviously taken from the French) and a dash of *machismo,* accompanied by respect for one's wife, the *patrona.*
- A taste for *asado* (beef grilled over a slow fire) which these city people have borrowed from the gauchos.
- A healthy appetite, which is usually considered a virtue in well-fed communities. The Porteño has enriched his traditional meat diet with Italian *pastas* and pizzas (bound up with the *mamma,* the mother figure).
- A liking for *mate,* the Latin American equivalent of tea. Originally a Paraguayan brew, it is now the national drink of Uruguay and Argentina as well. As the French writer Raymond Queneau ironically noted: "Drink *mate* and you turn into an Argentinian."
- A use of language swinging between *lunfardo,* an Italo-Porteño dialect that originally developed in the Buenos Aires underworld, and the vernacular. Other

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# An Argentinian writer unravels the mystery surrounding Buenos Aires' favourite song and dance

**The tango, according to the Argentinian writer Ernesto Sábato, "is perhaps the most original creation of the Rio de la Plata." As such, it has inspired numerous artists, three of whose drawings are shown here.**

Drawing by A. Berni © Centro Arte, Buenos Aires

Porteño linguistic peculiarities include the use of reversed syllables—"tango", for example becomes "gotan"—and of borrowings from other immigrant dialects.

- Last but not least, an inordinate love of the tango, which the Porteño considers as the purest form of music and philosophy. But here we come up against a problem: is the tango really Argentinian?

The origin of the tango is a hotly disputed point in the Rio de la Plata region: did it begin in Argentina or Uruguay? To solve this problem it is necessary to go back to the musical folklore of Andalusia, since the striking similarity between the words "fandango" and "tango" is matched by the closeness of their musical relationship. But let us move a little further south, to Africa.

For it is very likely that the tango originated in Africa and then developed in Spain. Its original version was probably brought to America by black slaves and Andalusian settlers, whose music had already been influenced by African rhythms.

The Cuban musicologist Argeliers León has pointed out that the first blacks reached America in the ships of Christopher Columbus, which, of course, sailed from Spain. Once in America, they kept up their own festivals, which, however, slowly blended with those imposed on them by the Catholic Church. "In Uruguay," he notes, "these processional celebrations bring together such dance and musical forms as the *calenda,* the tango, the *candomblé,* the *chicha,* the bambula and the samba."

Latin-American Africanists and anthropologists have paid particular attention to the origin of the word tango. Some say it derives from the Congolese word *iango* (a type of dance); others maintain that it is an onomatopoeic rendering of the sound of a drum-beat. The French specialist on Latin America, Roger Bastide, believes that tango comes from the Bantu word *tamgu,* which means "to dance". For the Argentinian specialist on Africa, Ortiz Oderigo, "the expression tango is purely and simply a corruption of the name 'Shango', the god of storms and thunder in the mythology of the Yorubas of Nigeria.

So much for philology. Ortiz Oderigo does not put forward an opinion about the relationship between the earliest negro tangos and the later Rio de la Plata versions. He does, however, present a list of antecedents which, starting in the 15th century, indicate a direct continuity with popular Latin American and even with Andalusian music. And he states categorically that the Andalusian tango "results from a blend of Afro-Spanish music".

During the colonial period, the Spanish Viceroy Vertiz allowed popular dances to be held in the Rancheria theatre in Buenos Aires. The favourite dance was the fandango, which already foreshadowed some of the steps of the tango. This custom of popular dancing reached the height of its popularity in the mid-19th century, during the dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas. It was to disappear a little later in the general vogue for Europeanization.

Around the turn of the century, as the cities expanded and the less-favoured classes became better-off, the tango again emerged as the "typical" music of the Rio de la Plata cities.

In 1870, the blacks of Buenos Aires organized themselves into "nations", according to their countries of origin, and groups of carnival masqueraders appeared in Montevideo. In Uruguay, the tango appeared in a particularly authentic form, since Montevideo had a bigger black population than Argentina, whose blacks had begun to emigrate to the mines in the north.

The Porteño tango was born sometime around 1880 in suburban bars, in bordellos and among "women of ill repute". Some specialists even claim to know the actual place: the *Corrales Viejos* slaughterhouse. The tango was also enriched by improvised poems sung by the muleteers and gaucho minstrels of the pampas.

Two currents, then, flowed together to create the tango: a musical current of negro-Andalusian origin and a literary one of gaucho origin. The gaucho's mastery of the guitar was passed on to city-dwelling composers, and his gift for improvising verse was taken up by poets writing in dialect. As any budding Argentinian poet ▶

can testify, these two great poetic achievements—gaucho lyrical poetry and the tango—are not easy to live up to.

About the same time as the first tangos with lyrics appeared, the first *sencillismo* (easy-to-read) and *vanguardismo* (avant-garde) texts were published. They pointed the way to all later developments in Argentinian poetry. Thus the incorporation of verse into the music of the tango created a common denominator between it and the great literature of Argentina.

Argentinian literature and the tango share another common feature: nostalgia. The tangos express a longing for the adventurous life of the gaucho or the criminal, of the man whose luck has run out or whose woman has deserted him.

In the same vein, serious Argentinian poetry of the early 20th century sprang from the nostalgia of the uprooted immigrant. The urban poetry of Jorge Luis Borges in the next generation also expressed nostalgia for the Buenos Aires underworld.

Such is the story of the tango's social climb, if the conquest of the privileged classes can be considered a climb. From the slaves it passed to the poor, from them to the middle class and the aristocracy.

Between the two World Wars, the tango made its way to Europe, reaching the height of success with the triumph of its greatest exponent, the singer Carlos Gardel.

Through personal appearances and films, Gardel brought the tango to a wider audience, first in France and the United States and then throughout Latin America. With Gardel, the tango reached its widest public but not its highest musical development, which had already been achieved before Gardel's "tango-song".

With his great gifts as a singer and his personal charisma, Gardel projected the image of the masterful Argentinian male. At that time, anything from Argentina was assured of success. The country exported commodities of all kinds: from its grain and meat to its football and its tango. But to be perfectly honest, one must admit that this national Argentinian idol was...French. He was born in Toulouse in 1890 and arrived in Argentina at the age of three.

Although they may not know much about him, Europeans identify the gaucho with the tango, and in the 1920s and 1930s, the European public considered that no tango could be genuine unless danced and sung by people dressed up like gauchos. In fact they were not far wrong, considering the gaucho's contribution to the tango.

When performed in films or plays today, the tango generally brings a slightly ironic smile to people's lips. Nevertheless, its rhythms can still be heard in many a French hit song, and in Japan it is so popular that bands reproduce with oriental precision the rhythms that have reached them from Buenos Aires.

The tango has also been used to express more deep-seated emotional tensions, as in the play *Tango* by the Pole Slavomir Mrozeck and in the film *Last Tango in Paris* by the Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci.

In Argentina today, the tango is paradoxically on its way in...and out. On the one hand, it is looked on as a relic from the past, since only the older generation still remembers how to dance it; the younger generation has replaced Carlos Gardel with more vociferous idols. On the other hand, an "avant-garde tango" is making its mark, backed by the composer Astor Piazzolo and by the intellectuals.

The tango has been aptly defined by the film director Simon Feldman as "the sound of the life of Buenos Aires, a distillation of the city". But there are times when the city seems indifferent, if not hostile or repressive, towards its own sound. When Feldman finished his full-length documentary on the tango in 1970, he had great difficulty in getting it shown in Buenos Aires, whereas in Europe and North America it was snapped up by television.

A final pessimistic note: the great exponents of the tango have been short-lived. There is even a tradition that tango singers die in accidents, beginning with the great Carlos Gardel, who was burnt to death in a plane crash in 1935.

But sometimes the dead survive in myths which make them larger than life. People still say, metaphorically, of Gardel, 42 years after his death: "Carlos is singing better every day". There are even fans who believe, or who wish to believe, that he is still alive somewhere in Latin America. In some Latin American countries the anniversary of his death is commemorated each year.

In one way or another, the tango still asserts its vitality in Argentina and elsewhere in the world. It is one of the most universal products that the Porteños, and Argentina itself, could present when wishing to affirm their cultural identity.

■ **César Fernandez Moreno**

# SPANISH OVERSEAS

## Born 1,000 years ago, the Spanish language is today spoken by 200 million Latin Americans

***by Marcos A. Morínigo***

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**MARCOS A. MORINIGO,** *Argentinian philologist, is director of the Institute of Philology at the university of Buenos Aires. He has taught at several universities in North and South America and has published many studies on Spanish literature and philology.*

WHEN Castile recently celebrated its 1,000th anniversary, no one thought to have a special ceremony for the 1,000th birthday of the Castilian language. This is most certainly an oversight, for over the centuries it has become a living bond between peoples and continents.

The history of a language is closely linked to that of the people who speak it. When their fortunes run high, the language is invested with vigour and prestige, but when times are less fortunate, it begins to atrophy.

The first appearance of Castilian as a written language dates back to the 10th century A.D., in the form of a scribe's gloss on a manuscript written in low Latin. Even at this date, Castilian possessed certain forms of its own, which distinguished it from neighbouring dialects. These innovations were to render the other dialects archaic.

Castilian began to appear in literary form to describe the exploits of great popular heroes and to narrate local events. Elsewhere in Spain, Latin continued to be used for these purposes, although the scribes no longer had a sufficient grasp of the language and sprinkled their manuscripts with the vernacular, with which they were more familiar.

The oldest Castilian literature probably consists of short poems about famous court figures. These were followed by more ambitious works on similar themes.

The form of Castilian spoken in the capital of Castile, Burgos, became Spain's literary language, in which lyric and epic poetry, novels, and historical, religious and scholarly works would be written. Writers from parts of Spain speaking other dialects would opt for Castilian when seeking to reach a national audience.

In 1492, the *Reconquista,* the conquest of Moorish Spain by the Spaniards, came to an end with the fall of the Muslim Kingdom of Granada. In the same year, Christopher Columbus brought a "new world" to the kings of Castile and Leon, an unhoped-for gift which fate had laid in their hands.

The Spanish monarchs were eager to find out the exact size of their vast new possessions, and were hungry for information about the people, the natural life and products of the New World. Countless expeditions set sail from the ports of Castile to the Americas.

Mariners set out in search of gold and spices. At one point Columbus and his crew thought they had reached the coasts of the fabulous Golden Peninsula or Cipango (Japan). The Spanish adventurer Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon made landfall on the snow-bound coasts of Virginia, to the vast disappointment of the gold-hunters. For, according to a widespread belief which Columbus shared, gold was the son of the sun and only to be found in hot countries. It was gold that determined the direction of Columbus's voyages and took him to the coasts of Venezuela and Colombia, to Panama. Nicaragua and the Caribbean.

The lure of gold also drew the conquistadors Grijalva, Cortès and Pánfilo de Narvaez to the coasts of Mexico, Spaniards and Portuguese to Brazil, Solís to the Rio del Plata, and Pizarro to Peru.

The Spanish kings set themselves the goal of snatching the souls of the infidels from the jaws of Hell and converting them to Christianity.

The Spanish humanists, for their part, saw the whole of America as a vast region where Spanish would be spoken.

Following in the footsteps of the Spanish grammarian Debrija (1444-1522), the humanists identified the glory of the Spanish language with their nation's imperial destiny and were ready to see parallels between Spanish and the Latin which had been propagated by the armies of the Roman empire. "If Spain rules and has contacts with other parts of the world, the old and the new, the Spanish language must be taught in the same way as Latin".

Within 20 years, the Indians of the Antilles were speaking Spanish with Bartolomé de Las Casas. Soon after, in Mexico, the Tlaxcaltecas began to learn Spanish, followed by the Aztec nobles and their sons. Further south, the household of the Inca studied Spanish, and when the navigator Alvaro Nuñez reached the forests of Paraguay in 1541, it was in Spanish that the Guaranis greeted him.

Indeed, by the middle of the 16th century, Spanish was the only language spoken in the streets of Potosi (Bolivia), as well in Cajamarca and Cuzco (Peru) and in Quito (Ecuador).

The conquistadors felt that it was not for them to learn the languages of the conquered territories, but that their vassals should speak the language of their victors. In *La Araucana,* his great epic about the struggle of the Araucanian Indians against the Spanish invaders, the poet Alonso de Ercilla (1533-1594) noted with astonishment that three of the conquistadors, including "the valiant Ibarra", had learned the Indians' language.

The cities of the Rio de la Plata region, such as Asunción, Corrientes and Concepción, where a high percentage of the population was Indian, were bilingual. But Santa Fé and Buenos Aires, which were founded by bilingual mestizos with a large following of Indian servants, became completely Spanish cities.

Spanish has always been intensively taught in Latin America. In May 1770, Charles III signed the *Réal Cedula,* royal letters ordering the colonial authorities to do everything within their power to promote the teaching of Spanish to the Indians. In most cases the king's instructions were not carried out, but the future governments of independent Latin America were to carry out his wishes, and the use of Spanish spread rapidly in the 19th century.

Local languages did not, of course, disappear and, with the exception of Uruguay, they are still spoken from Mexico to Patagonia, though less so today than in the past.

Literacy campaigns and the development of public schooling obviously promote the teaching of the official language of the country—Spanish. Whether admitted or not, such programmes push indigenous tongues into the background, where they fall into oblivion.

In a world where standardization is progressing by leaps and bounds, a standard language is an excellent way of spreading culture.

In Latin America today, local languages are little more than archeological relics and Spanish is the only substitute for them, not only because it is spoken by 200 million people; not only because for five centuries their most eloquent spokesmen have used it; nor because Latin America's greatest works of literature have been written in it: but because the Spanish language has given those who can speak it the concepts and forms of Western culture.

■ **Marcos A. Morínigo**

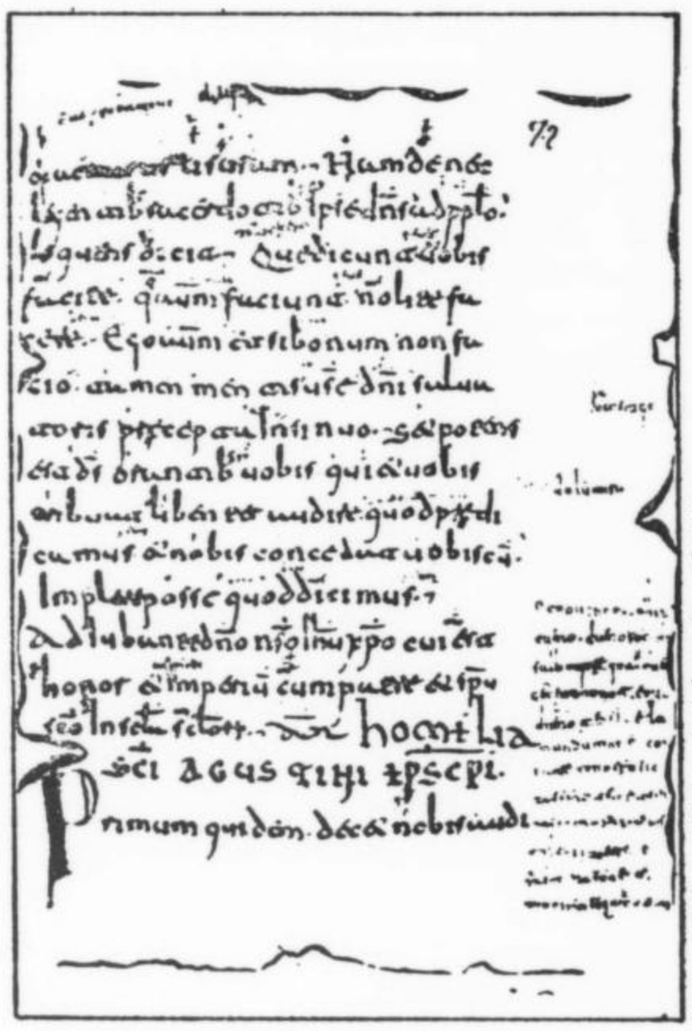
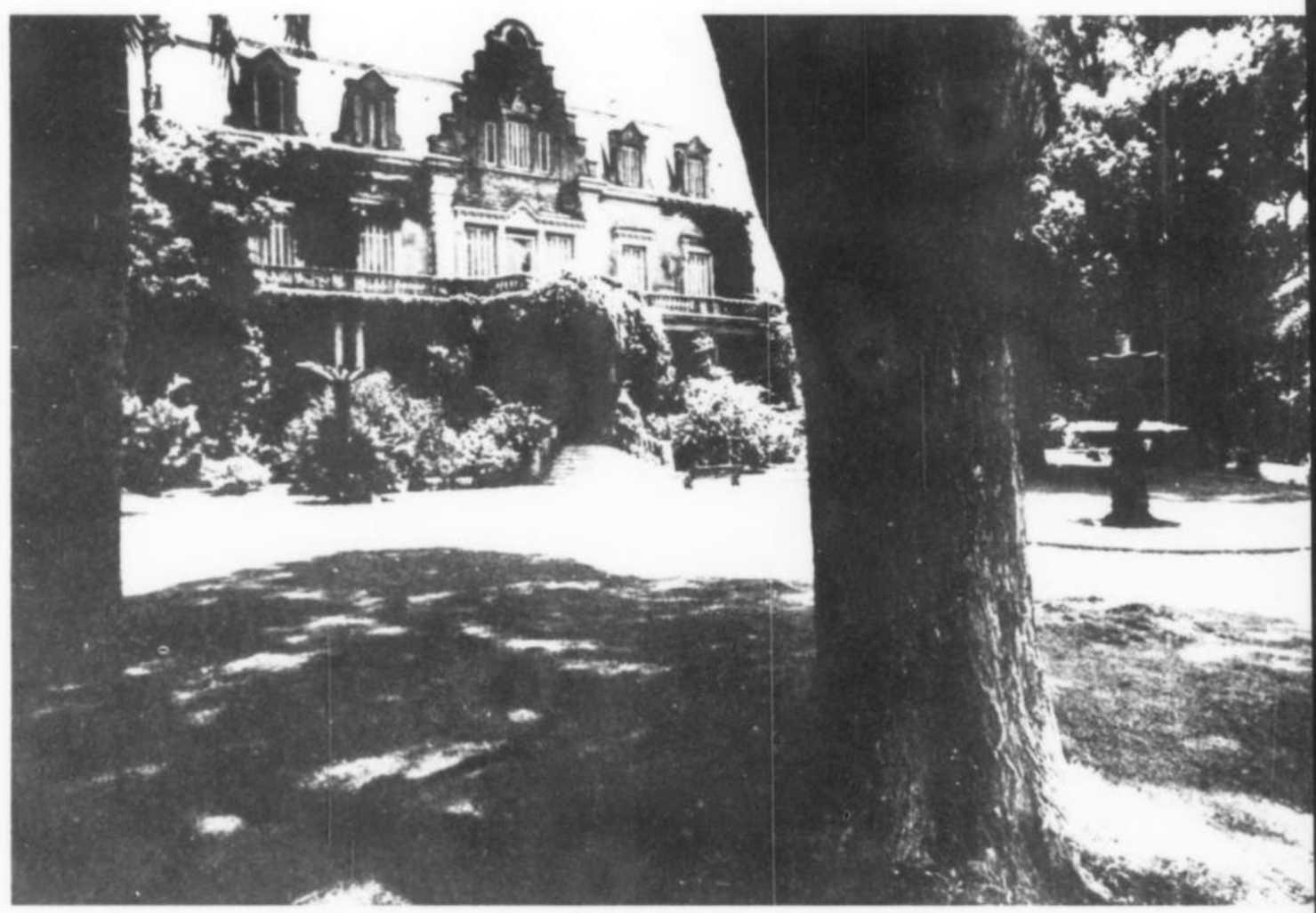


Photo © Office of Diplomatic Information, Madrid

*Above, the earliest known text in the Castilian language, written 1,000 years ago in 977 A.D. It consists of 43 words penned by an anonymous monk of the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla, in Logroño, northern Spain. Today Castilian is spoken by almost 300 million persons, mainly in Latin America and Spain.*

# VICTORIA OCAMPO'S GIFT

**On 15 January 1973, Mme Victoria Ocampo and her sister Mme Angelica Ocampo, of Argentina, donated to Unesco a group of estates including the spacious Villa Ocampo (right) at San Isidro, Buenos Aires. In accordance with the wishes of its donor, Victoria Ocampo, the villa will be used "for promotion, research, experimentation and development of activities related to culture, literature, art and social communication, which are aimed at improving the quality of human life...." The villa is particularly appropriate as a setting for "permanent studios or for programmes of research, experimentation or production related to the cinema, television, theatre, music and literature, for translation or new forms of expression and communication, as well as new types and techniques of cultural and artistic creation and art education."**



***by Jacques Rigaud***

IT would be easy enough to see Victoria Ocampo's life and work as the intellectual adventures of a rich heiress in love with literature. But to do this would not only be committing a grave injustice towards a woman who has fought many battles and taken many risks, it would also ignore her remarkable achievement as a pioneer in promoting the meeting of cultures.

Victoria Ocampo was born at the end of the last century, into a family whose history is closely interwoven with that of the Argentinian Republic itself. She enjoyed the happy childhood and cosmopolitan education of the privileged classes of that time, and like many of her kind mignt have been satisfied with the cushioned and glossy existence of the rich. However, her life was to take a different course.

A precocious intellect, a generosity of heart and mind which spurred her to action, indefatigable energy, insatiable curiosity, courage begging to be put to the test, an unrivalled gift for rallying her friends and leading them into the fray—all these qualities destined Victoria Ocampo to a life of creativity and commitment.

It all began in 1924 when she invited Radindranath Tagore, who had prolonged a stay in Argentina for health reasons, to her family home at San Isidro, near Buenos Aires. Through this encounter, Victoria not only discovered the work of the great Indian writer and the fascination of Indian culture, she also discovered her own vocation in life, which was to entertain, encourage, help and introduce to one another writers, artists and creators of all kinds. Ever since then Victoria Ocampo has been fulfilling her mission at a pace which seems to have made her forget to grow old.

She works in the two houses with which she has become identified; her stone house at San Isidro and a spiritual dwelling of her own creation, the review *Sur* ("South").

In the first, she has been hostess to some of the great names of this century: José Ortega y Gasset, Igor Stravinsky, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, Pablo Neruda, Jacques Maritain, Ernest Ansermet, Albert Camus, André Malraux, Saint-John Perse, Jules Supervielle, Graham Greene, Roger Caillois, Indira Gandhi, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Michel Butor. There is no end to the list of distinguished visitors whose presence can still be felt in this opulent home which has become a temple of culture.

As for *Sur,* which Victoria Ocampo has headed since its creation in 1931, there is probably no other review which can rival it for boldness, discernment and eclecticism. During my visit to the Ocampo villa in 1976 in the nostalgic mellowness of an Argentinian autumn, the scent of dead leaves mingling with that of late-blooming flowers, Victoria proudly showed me the complete collection of her review. I picked up the first volume and, while leafing through it, came across the signature of Alejo Carpentier in the first issue. It took considerable perspicacity to publish the work of this prodigious novelist (see article page 8) 46 years ago.

When a complete analytical index and anthology are made of *Sur,* it will be obvious from the contributors (1), the subjects treated and the intellectual curiosity and tolerance it has always shown that it is an institution of international intellectual cooperation.

A recent issue, which appeared at the end of 1976, deals with translating, a vital but neglected aspect of the inter-relation-

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**JACQUES RIGAUD** *is Unesco's Assistant Director-General for programme support and administration.*

*(1) They include Lorca, Joyce, Kazantzaki, Faulkner, Sartre, Toynbee, Heidegger, Pirandello, Gabriela Mistral and Thomas Mann.*

# FOR WORLD CULTURE

Photos © V. Ocampo, Buenos Aires

**Far left, Victoria Ocampo in 1947 with Unesco's first Director-General, Julian Huxley. Left, Mme Ocampo a few years later with the French writer André Malraux.**

ship of cultures. The problems posed by translating were treated in the rigorous, challenging and imaginative fashion for which Victoria Ocampo is famous.

Despite all this, Victoria Ocampo's life has not been confined to running a house and a literary review. She is a writer herself, as well as a citizen whose commitment has on occasion landed her in prison. For several years she was president of Argentina's National Arts Fund. An indefatigable traveller, she always keeps herself informed about the latest intellectual developments.

She has far too strong a personality to steer clear of controversy. People of her calibre demand respect but they also tend to provoke strong reactions. Yet it is almost worth airing criticism of her simply to see how easily it can be refuted.

Though she has sometimes been criticized for being too cosmopolitan and though it is true that she has done a lot to introduce art and literature from other countries to Argentina, no one is more deeply Argentinian than she.

As the French writer Etiemble, who is by no means given to flattery, wrote in 1962: "She who for 30 years has spent the better part of her fortune in order to print and distribute the works of writers whom she valued, whether they sold or not, and whether they were Yankee, Argentinian or European; she who for 30 years, and contrary to all business sense, has been giving the world the best Spanish-language literary review—how could anyone think that she has not served her country?"

Her efforts to promote the international reputation of Borges, Sábato and many other Argentinian writers are proof of her deep-seated attachment to a land whose cultural identity she has done so much to uphold.

She has also been criticized for preferring European culture. But Tagore, Nehru and a number of Japanese writers have acknowledged their indebtedness to her, and Octavio Paz has said how much the whole of Latin America owes her. The ethnologist Alfred Métraux once remarked that Victoria Ocampo "also considers herself American in the geographical sense of the term: she likes to discover themes and elements which are common to the literature of the New World and which set it apart from that of Europe".

Can she be dismissed as a mere woman of letters? No, for she has done much for architects like Le Corbusier and musicians like Ansermet and Stravinsky, and *Sur* has shown continuing interest in the social sciences.

And, lest one should be tempted to think that it was easy for a member of the upper classes like her to lead such a brilliant life, the fact is that it was by no means easy for Victoria Ocampo to promote the emancipation of women in Argentina during the 1930s not just in words but in action, and later to risk not only her personal fortune but also her freedom because of her commitment. In short, she paid for her privileges by continually taking risks and by laying herself open to misunderstanding and even insults.

Lastly, some might be tempted to say that Victoria Ocampo's honours list is now slightly out of date, and that the world has moved on to other things. Even here the would-be critic must accept that Victoria Ocampo not only extended a warm welcome to the *nouveau roman,* but she also helped, and still helps, young writers.

Always receptive to new ideas from wherever they come, she is quite definitely not one of those who, like the French 19th-century politician and philosopher Royer-Collard, admit sadly that "at my age one no longer reads, one re-reads."

Victoria has always been enthusiastic about new talent and ideas and quick to tire of anything that smacks of the establishment. Like Borges, Sábato and Cortázar, she is consumed by a desire to penetrate beneath the surface of things, a refusal to be taken in by shadow-play.

To be questioned by her is a far from restful process: she challenges, defies and harries her interlocutor until she has discovered the truth and then, as Octavio Paz has written, she can be seen "with outstretched hand, ready to grasp another hand".

Victoria Ocampo's ties with Unesco date

back a long way. It would have been surprising indeed if a pioneer in international intellectual cooperation such as she had not shown interest in an institution whose purpose is to provide a permanent basis for just such cooperation. When Julian Huxley visited Buenos Aires, and talked to Victoria Ocampo about Unesco, his words must have made a deep impression, for years later she bequeathed her two houses at San Isidro and Mar del Plata to the Organization so that her work there may be continued.

To this end, Unesco is making plans for the future in close collaboration with the donor. As Victoria Ocampo's life has clearly shown, progress in the field of culture often depends on the personal initiative of a small number of people, on the visionary daring of a few possessors of creative talent, and also on the actions of people like herself who have a gift for making things happen, creating needs, forging connexions and inducing the talented to exceed their own limits.

Nonetheless, once bold initiatives of this sort have been taken, it is up to the community to take over from the individual and guarantee continuity without destroying any of the initial vitality.

The noble concept of the meeting of cultures, which forms the cornerstone of Unesco's mission, is perfectly embodied in the person of Victoria Ocampo. By carrying on her work and lauding her example —one which can be transposed to any time or place—Unesco will remember the most precious element of a personal, and to that extent ephemeral, life's adventure, namely the fervour praised by the poet Saint-John Perse:

"There are 'real' people who by their very nature make us believe in them. Victoria Ocampo can be said to have conducted her life's work like a great tree of her native land; or better yet—since trees are bound by their roots—like the imperious Rio de la Plata which dominated her childhood, adolescence and years of mature womanhood, and whose pulsing rhythm still resounds through her being. This river is as true to its mighty course as to its wedding with the sea and to its distant alliance with far-out ocean currents that sweep it towards other shores.

"Dear Victoria, great force of strength and candour, inalienable and possessive just like your own Rio de la Plata, there are many of us in Europe, America and Asia who consider you one of the finest exponents of the Argentinian spirit, which expresses itself so proudly in you, a complex soul of many facets, both prodigal and fatalist, passionate in its enthusiasms yet regardless of the consequences in moments of action and indifferent to continuity."

This fine tribute calls, however, for one comment: "indifferent to continuity" should now read as "determined to continue"—a task Unesco has taken upon itself.

■ **Jacques Rigaud**

# AVANT-GARDE ART FROM THE TROPICS

*(continued from page 34)*

form. Participants literally have to force their way through the object, and the conventional act of contemplating a work of art is thus transformed into an inescapable living experience.

Carlos Cruz Diez expresses himself in a different way but his aims and his conception of art are the same. He sets out to make colour "speak" with all its creative power. The main virtue of light is its protean ability to keep on changing. This is what the Impressionists tried to capture when they painted series of pictures of the same subject, but they only managed to achieve their aim in a representational and allusive manner.

Cruz Diez sets out to portray the continuous transformations occuring in light and its independent creative power. In his paintings, he attempts to achieve an "open-ended" situation that is constantly evolving. He believes that, in traditional painting, time is constricted and space is falsified or simulated. His aim is to replace "the representation of space by real space." He believes that a work of art is a reality in itself—an "autonomous reality".

Cruz Diez has embarked on this voyage of discovery and conquest through his "Physiochromes" and "Chromosaturations" and induced colour effects. One has only to approach some of his colours for them to start vibrating and moving. Not only is it impossible to see them twice in the same way, but the painting itself starts to produce new colours which the artist did not paint but which the existing colours induce on the retina. In this way, the painting embodies a time element, as well as creating its own space dimension in which the spectator plays an active role.

Although Cruz Diez's experimentation follows quite different and original lines, his aims coincide with those of Soto. They are both intent on banishing simulated space and time in art and on creating autonomous space and time in which the spectator can actively participate. There are no moving elements in Cruz Diez's work; instead, movement is created on the surface through the dynamic effects of colour. His paintings come alive, constantly changing in appearance and nuance depending on one's viewpoint and the light penetrating them.

Carlos Cruz Diez acknowledges a debt to his experience as a graphic artist. For a long time, he was an advertising designer and draughtsman. This can clearly be seen in many aspects of his work, especially at the outset of his career. However, something must have conditioned him at an earlier stage for his sense of space and its independence to have developed as it did. Cruz Diez is also a child of tropical Latin America and this must have had a profound influence on his feeling for space and colour.

A third Venezuelan who was also born on the banks of the Orinoco arrived in Paris with his two compatriots in the 1950s. His name is Alejandro Otero. Though he moved from Picasso-like works to abstract and kinetic art, his aims were the same: he set out to create a new form of space in works of art that also embody time and light.

He began by painting on canvas and wood, evolving the highly expressive and original manner to be seen in his *Colorit-mos,* in which lines of pure colour criss-cross each other and create new colour and dimensional relationships. Then he went on to create objects in space. Using the vibration of metals ionized by light, he erected giant structures which, under the effect of the wind and the time of day, change shape and colour as if they were alive. The vibrations of the light on the polished surfaces rise up like mirages or unexpected patterns of reflection on clouds and buildings. This is what he calls "vibrating integrals" or "solar wings".

His structures are like endless performances which unfold before the spectators in a continuous display of shapes and colours. His works are designed for large spaces, and merge into the landscape. The artist has erected these dazzling and fascinating "reflecting hills" in Washington, D.C., Bogota, and Ciudad Guayana in Venezuela.

The changing environment of tropical Latin America and its ambiguous relationship with man have molded the creative sensibility of each of these three outstanding Latin-American artists. It is no mere coincidence that each of them, in his own way, has played a leading role in the development of kinetic art.

■ **Arturo Uslar-Pietri**

# UNESCO AND LATIN AMERICA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Photo Unesco

**Restoration work on the church at Checacupe, Peru, forms part of one of the programmes for the conservation of monuments and other cultural treasures in Latin America with which Unesco is associated.**

IN the past few years, Unesco has stepped up its activities relating to the preservation and restoration of monuments and other cultural treasures in Latin America, whose countries are increasingly aware of the importance of their cultural heritage as a factor in their cultural identity as well as its place in their overall development.

In 1974, a regional programme was launched in six Andean countries (Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela). Financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it has been so successful that it has stimulated a number of private initiatives as well. A wide variety of activities has been initiated, in such fields as professional training, the listing and preservation of monuments and other treasures, and urban planning.

Since 1975, a training programme has been organized each year at Cuzco (Peru), with courses on the preservation of architectural monuments, archeological remains and other works of art. Over a hundred students from the six countries in the region have taken up scholarships to attend theoretical and practical courses given by more than 40 international specialists.

Meanwhile, laboratory-workshops for the restoration of paintings and sculpture have been set up at La Paz (Peru) and Quito (Ecuador), while the activities of existing laboratory-workshops at Santiago de Chile, at Lima (Peru) and at Bogota (Colombia) have been strengthened.

All the countries participating in this regional programme have embarked on the urgent task of drawing up inventories of all their historic buildings and other art treasures, with the assistance of a large number of experts and consultants.

Specialists in a wide range of fields have been called upon to deal with the problems of preserving sun-dried brick, stone, paper, wood, pottery and metal, as well as the restoration of colonial style buildings and questions related to museology and the preservation and planning of historic towns.

Seminars and symposia have also been held with the participation of internationally-known experts on such themes as "The Preservation of Historic Towns" (Quito, Ecuador), "Museology" (Bogota, Colombia), and "The Listing of Monuments" (Santiago de Chile).

A key target of the regional programme is to make the Latin American cultural heritage more widely known and to encourage the active participation of the people who live near the historical monuments. To achieve this goal, exhibitions, lectures, symposia and round-table discussions have been organized, brochures and articles have been published, and radio and television broadcasts have been produced. A notable example of these activities is an exhibition entitled "5,000 Years of Peruvian Cloth", presented at Lima in 1977.

Unesco is also participating in another major programme in Latin America, the COPESCO plan, in which Peru and Unesco are collaborating on the cultural and economic development of the area between Cuzco and Lake Titicaca. The plan's objectives are, firstly, to preserve monuments of the pre-Columbian and colonial periods, particularly numerous in this area which was once the centre of the Inca empire, and secondly, to foster the growth of tourism. For the tourism attracted by these historic monuments may help to promote the region's economic development and improve living standards, which are low.

In the preliminary stages of the plan, Unesco is putting its experience in restoration techniques at Peru's disposal. The execution of the work will be financed by the Peruvian government and the Inter-American Development Bank.

In accordance with the wishes of the Peruvian government, Unesco will continue to provide technical assistance on individual restoration problems. Many specialists and consultants are working with Peruvian technicians in such fields as archeology, the restoration of architecture, painting and sculpture, as well as museology and urban planning. A workshop-laboratory in Cuzco is also serving as a centre for regional training courses given by international experts.

In addition to these two major projects, Unesco is participating in a number of other specialized activities related to the preservation of the cultural heritage of Latin American countries. With Honduras, Unesco is collaborating on the preservation of the Maya site at Copán and is assisting Guatemala in repairing the damage caused by last year's earthquakes. Unesco is also cooperating with Panama in drawing up an inventory of the country's historic monuments, and with Brazil in organizing training courses for specialists in the restoration of monuments and in the preservation of historic towns and villages.

Finally, Unesco is working closely with Argentina and Uruguay on the preservation and restoration of the ruins of Jesuit missions; with Uruguay on the exploration and excavation of the prehistoric site at Salto Grande; with Bolivia on the conservation of archeological sites and the restoration of old Jesuit villages in the east of the country; and with the Churubusco training centre in Mexico. ■

# UNESCO BOOKSHELF ON LATIN AMERICA

## Works in Unesco's Literature Translations Series

**ANTONIO MANUEL DE ALMEIDA (Brazil). Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant.** Translated by Linton L. Barrett. Washington, U.S.A. 1959, 244 pp.

**Anthology of Mexican Poetry.** Translated by Samuel Beckett, compiled by Octavio Paz; preface C.M. Bowra. Bloomington, Indiana University Press. Thames & Hudson, London, 1958, 213 pp.

**CONCOLORCORVO (Peru). El Lazarillo; A Guide for Inexperienced Travellers between Buenos Aires and Lima, 1773.** Translated by Walter D. Kline. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1965, 315 pp.

**MANUEL DE JESUS GALVAN (Dominican Republic). The Cross and the Sword.** Translated by Robert Graves. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1954, 366 pp. Victor Gollancz, London, U.K., 1956, 366 pp.

**BALDOMERO LILLO (Chile). The Devil's Pit and other stories.** Translated by Esther S. Dillon and Angel Flores, Washington, 1959, 152 pp.

**JOACHIM MARIA MACHADO DE ASSIS (Brazil). Yaya Garcia.** Translated by R.L. Scott-Buccleuch. London, Peter Owen, 1976, 220 pp.

**Modern Brazilian poetry.** Translated by John Nist. Bloomington, Ind., Indiana University Press, 1962, 175 pp.

**TERESA DE LA PARRA (Venezuela). Mama Blanca's Souvenirs.** Translated by Harriet de Onís, Washington, U.S.A. 1959, 129 pp.

**OCTAVIO PAZ (Mexico). Selected Poems.** Translated by M. Rukeyser in collaboration with the author. Bloomington, Ind., Indiana University Press, 1963. 171 pp; Jonathan Cape, London, 1970, under the title *Configurations.*

**FLORENCIO SANCHEZ (Uruguay). Representative Plays.** Translated by Willis Knapp Jones. Washington, 1961, 326 pp.

**DOMINGO F. SARMIENTO (Argentina). ' Travels. A Selection.** Translated by Inès Muñoz, Washington, 1963, 297 pp.

**JAIME TORRES BODET (Mexico). Selected Poems.** Translated by S.P. Karsen. Bloomington, Ind., Indiana University Press, 1964, 155 pp.

**JUAN ZORILLA DE SAN MARTİN (Uruguay). Tabaré: An Indian Legend of Uruguay.** Translated by Walter Owen. Washington, 1956, 366 pp.

***Many of the above works are out of print, and are listed for information purposes.***

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# THE LAND-LOCKED ISLAND OF PARAGUAY *(continued from page 53)*

And so Governor Lázaro de Ribera was mistaken. The language of the conquered peoples was not, and could not be the dominant language. Guarani retreated into the depths of the collective memory, settled there like a sediment, and came to dominate *from within* the self-expression of Paraguay, whether it be bilingual or not.

"Colonial society", Meliá explains, "was officially Spanish-speaking from the start. Guarani played no part in administration or official policy. During the colonial period, Guarani had no literary foundations and was in contact with a major literary language—Spanish. Gradually, a Paraguayan Guarani emerged which had all the characteristics of a vernacular language: it became the mother tongue of a group dominated socially and politically by another group speaking a different language."

Such a situation could perhaps be described as di-lingualism rather than bilingualism.

According to Meliá, "Paraguay is bilingual, but few Paraguayans are themselves bilingual. Indeed, it may be that no one in Paraguay is really bilingual. The situation can best be described as rural-urban bilingualism". For although Guarani is even spoken in the capital, Asunción, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the towns are moving towards Spanish monolingualism while in the countryside the proportion of monolingual Guarani speakers is very high.

The use of Guarani or Spanish in Paraguay is governed by social and regional factors. Even people who think of themselves as bilingual will never discuss certain topics in the indigenous language: it would be simply impossible because social circumstances do not allow it. The Guarani speaker thus finds in fact that he is excluded from a whole range of fields because he cannot make himself heard in them. Worse still, he cannot even conceptualize them because he lacks adequate linguistic means of self-expression.

If, for example, someone speaking Guarani had access to the world of advanced technology, he would find that he would have to use so many neologisms that his language would be practically annihilated.

In Paraguay, then, the problem of bilingualism is rendered more acute by the fact that Guarani, which is above all an oral language, has become impoverished during the centuries in which it was forced to play a marginal role in Paraguayan society and culture. It is, according to Meliá, "like a country which has been deprived of vast areas of territory and is losing its capacity to express its cultural identity".

It is clear that the future of Guarani—like that of Spanish—is closely linked to the historical destiny of the country itself.

Although Guarani has been relegated to the status of a vehicle for communicating emotions, it will continue to modulate the expression of a whole people's deepest and most vital feelings. Herein lies its strength.

Linked to the mysteries of blood, instinct and collective memory, the survival of Guarani is guaranteed by the density of the linguistic sediment that forms the foundations of the bilingual island of Paraguay.

■ **Augusto Roa Bastos**

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# LATIN AMERICA'S JOURNEY TO SELF-DISCOVERY

*(continued from page 7)*

lower opinion of the mestizo: "In America everything which is not European is barbaric", Alberdi wrote.

To "educate for civilization", as it were, and to bring in men who would do for Latin America what they had already done in Europe and the United States amounted to joining up with those who were already far advanced along the path of progress and civilization. Sarmiento warned that if Latin America did not take this course, it might lose its chance to become an outpost of modern civilization.

Without experience, the Latin Americans were obliged to ask for guidance from those who were further ahead along the same path—Western Europe and the United States. If Latin America could not be a centre of civilization, then let it at least be an outpost. If it could not be the locomotive, it could at least be the caboose.

Europe, however, was engaged in brutal imperialism at the time and the United States was in an expansionist phase that began with the 1847 war against Mexico and continued in 1898 with its ouster of Iberian imperialism from the Caribbean. These events made Latin Americans conscious of their cultural conflicts and of the need to surmount them. They also became aware of their inferiority complex, which had facilitated the shift from an imposed dependency to a freely accepted one.

The Uruguayan essayist José Enrique Rodé (1871-1917) was one of the first to decry the errors of the civilization policy. He exposed the tendency to "de-latinize" and the mania for imitating all things northern. In his book *Ariel,* he wrote: "One imitates the people in whom one sees superiority and prestige." And that is why the United States, he added, is "conquering us morally".

Imitate, yes, but invent as well, urged the Mexican Antonio Caso (1883-1946). Latin America, "our America", as it was called by the Cuban writer and patriot José Martí (1853-1895), is not a vacuum which has to be filled over and over again. Latin America is a reality: it has a culture and a long history.

America is the Indians, and also their conquerors, the liberators struggling to put an end to the conquest as well as the conservatives seeking to preserve the established order and the civilizers trying to jump ahead of their own experience. Latin American culture has overcome the supposed superiority of all the cultures which different people had tried to impose on it. Each of these cultures was absorbed and mixed in the melting pot.

This attempt to produce an assimilated culture also made Latin Americans aware of the errors of previous generations. These errors had been made at the very moment when the continent achieved its political emancipation.

It was a mistake to assume that Latin Americans were incapable of acquiring their own form of culture and civilization. "Incapacity", José Martí wrote, "does not lie with new-born nations which need reforms tailored to their needs and a beneficial greatness, but in those who want to rule genuinely original nations, whose development has been unusual and violent, with laws that were forged over four centuries of freedom in the United States... The spirit of government must be adjusted to the particular constitution of the country. Government is nothing more than the equilibrium of the natural elements of a country". The path of genius would have been to bring together what had seemed to be separate. "The problem of independence", Martí added, "was not to change the form but to change the spirit".

This is what Latin Americans have sought to achieve throughout this century: a change of spirit in terms of their own past and their own culture. One of the leading proponents of this movement, the Mexican political thinker José Vasconcelos (1882-1959), spoke of a *Cosmic Race.* By this he meant a Latin American melting pot which would produce its own forms of culture and its own specific identity.

It was a painfully earned identity, but one which its heirs could be proud of. "What fatherland", wrote Martí, "can a man have more pride in than these American republics born of travail, raised up among the silent masses of Indians, amid the noise of battle and of the book and candle held in the bloody hands of a hundred apostles? Never have such compact and advanced nations been created in so brief a historical time out of such disordered factors".

A complex cultural identity and by the same token an original one. The experience of men in extraordinary and complex situations: this explains their original contribution to history and to human culture —in short, to mankind. ■ **Leopoldo Zea**

# UNESCO NEWSROOM

## BOOKSHELF

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● **The Caribbean Mathematics Project: Training the Teacher as the Agent of Reform,** by H. Martyn Cundy. (Unesco: International Bureau of Education "Experiments and Innovations in Education" series, no. 32) 1977, 72 pp. (10 F).

● **Communication Policies in India,** by M.V. Desai. 1977, 88 pp. (18 F).

● **Communication Policies in Sri Lanka,** by M.A. de Silva and Reggie Siriwardene. 1977, 59 pp. (12 F).

● **Readings on Population for Law Students,** edited by L.T. Lee and P. Saney. 1977, 123 pp. (22 F).

● **Cultural Policy in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,** by A.A. Zvorykin, with the assistance of N.I. Golubtsova and E.I. Rabinovich. 2nd impression 1977, 68 pp. (12 F); **Cultural Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany.** 2nd impression 1977. 53 pp. (10 F); **Cultural Rights as Human Rights.** 3rd impression 1977, 125 pp. (20 F); **Cultural Policy in Czechoslovakia,** by Miroslav Marek with the co-operation of Milan Hromádka and Josef Chroust. 2nd impression 1977, 77 pp. (13 F); **Cultural Policy in Tunisia,** by Rafik Said. 2nd impression 1977, 56 pp. (10 F). (All in Unesco's "Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies" series)

● **New Trends in Integrated Science Teaching, Vol. II,** edited by P.E. Richmond. 2nd impression 1977, 239 pp. (40 F).

● **New Trends in Mathematics Teaching, Vol. III,** 2nd impression 1977, 145 pp. (28 F).

● **Youth Institutions and Services: Present State and Development.** 1977, 51 pp. (8 F); **Buildings for School and Community Use: Five Case Studies.** 1977, 122 pp. (12 F). Nos. 23 and 26 in Unesco's "Educational Studies and Documents" series.

● **Education and Training of Users of Scientific and Technical Information: UNISIST Guide for Teachers,** by A.J. Evans, R.G. Rhodes and S. Keenan. 1977, 143 pp. (28 F).

● **Human Settlements** is the theme of Unesco's quarterly *Impact of Science on Society* (Vol. 27. No. 2, 1977). Each issues 9.50 F; annual subscription 32 F.

● **Ends and Means for Continuing Education** is the major theme of *Prospects,* Unesco's quarterly review of education (Vol. 7, No. 2, 1977). Each issue 9.50; annual subscription 32 F.

## Unesco publications on Latin American cultures

Since 1967, Unesco has been carrying out a broad programme of studies on Latin American cultures. Some of these studies have been published (in Spanish) under the general title "América Latina en su Cultura" (Latin America within its Culture) in collaboration with Siglo XXI publishers, Mexico City. The titles which have appeared so far are: *América Latina en su Literatura, América Latina en sus Artes* and *América Latina en su Arquitectura.* A study on Latin American music, *América Latina en su Musica,* will appear shortly. Another series, "El Mundo en América Latina" (The World in Latin America) has also been created; the first volume, *Africa en América Latina* (Africa in Latin America) is currently in preparation. In addition to these series, Unesco has published other important studies on various aspects of Latin American cultures, including a bibliography of Latin American literature *(Bibliografia General de la Literatura Latino-Americana)* and a work on architecture *(Panoramica de la Arquitectura Latino-Americana).*

## Unesco travelling exhibition on Latin America

"The Arts of Latin America" is the theme of the 12th travelling exhibition organized by Unesco in its programme for the international circulation of cultural works. The exhibition consists of hundreds of photos providing an overall picture of Latin American painting, sculpture, the decorative arts and architecture from pre-Columbian times to the present day.

At the request of Unesco's Member States, the exhibition will be displayed in different parts of the world from mid-October 1977. An identical exhibition will be presented at Bogota (Colombia) on the occasion of the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be held there from 10 to 20 January 1978.

## The challenge of the year 2000

A round-table discussion on "The Challenge of the Year 2000" was held at Unesco headquarters in Paris from 28 to 30 June 1977. Thirty internationally-known politicians, artists, thinkers and scientists, including Nobel Peace Prize-winners Lord Noel-Baker (U.K.) and Sean MacBride (Ireland) and Nobel Physics Prize-winner Alfred Kastler (France) expressed concern about the triple danger that now faces mankind: the nuclear threat, the environmental threat and the growing moral threat.

During the discussions, opened by Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of Unesco, and Mr. Luis Echeverría, former President of Mexico, alarm was expressed at "the sluggishness of the implementation of world nuclear disarmament as a first step to general and complete disarmament; the continued reckless plundering of the irreplaceable resources of the earth, arbitrary deforestation and the pollution of nature; the perceptible slackening of ethical standards and the invasion of men's minds by the subliminal influences of a press or mass media manipulated by economic interests, governments or other agencies or individuals for reasons of their own".

All the participants, irrespective of their political beliefs and their countries of origin, stressed "the need for the closest international cooperation in the solution of all these problems, including the continuing and urgent need for social justice, for the equitable sharing of natural resources and for a brake on unrestrained consumerism". All these questions, along with those of youth and unemployment, are factors in the new world economic order "which is a prerequisite for that peace so gravely threatened and so ardently desired by men, individually and collectively".

Among the participants were the Egyptian writer Tewfik Al-Hakim; Buckminster Fuller, American architect and writer; Jerzy Grotowski, Polish theatre director; Vladimir S. Kemenov, Vice-President of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Fine Arts; Prem Kirpal, Indian educationist; Takeo Kuwabara, professor of French literature at Tokyo; M.L. Mehrotra, Indian pulmonary physician; Peter Ustinov, actor, dramatist and film director; and Sir Ronald Syme, formerly Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford University.

## Fight against child-killing diseases

The World Health Organization has set itself the goal of providing immunization for all the world's children by 1990 through its Expanded Programme on Immunization. Safe, effective vaccines are available against such common childhood killers as diphtheria, measles, polio and tuberculosis. However, there is an urgent need for programmes to bring vaccines where they are most needed—it is estimated that less than 10 per cent of the 80 million children born each year in the developing countries are being immunized against these diseases.

## Venezuela's gift to Unesco cultural fund

Venezuela has paid $666,000 to the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture as a first instalment of $2 million it has pledged to the Fund. The Fund, set up by Unesco's General Conference in 1974, aims to finance and promote cultural projects in Unesco Member States with voluntary public and private help.

IMPRIMÉ EN FRANCE (Printed in France) — Août-Septembre 1977 — BROADARD GRAPHIQUE - COULOMMIERS - Dépôt légal C.1

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*by Max Figueroa*
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# Latin America's Iberian heritage

**From the Rio Grande to Patagonia, from Cuzco to Pernambuco, the influence of the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal) is all-pervasive in Latin American life, art and civilization. The Iberian heritage is reflected in Latin America's languages and many of its customs and beliefs, fused in the far-reaching process of ethnic and cultural intermingling which is one of the continent's most distinctive characteristics. The Spanish imprint can still be seen in the architecture of many buildings throughout Latin America. Left, the interior of a church in Quito, Ecuador, typical of the Spanish colonial or Jesuit style. Below, an Indian painting on bark (see caption page 3).**